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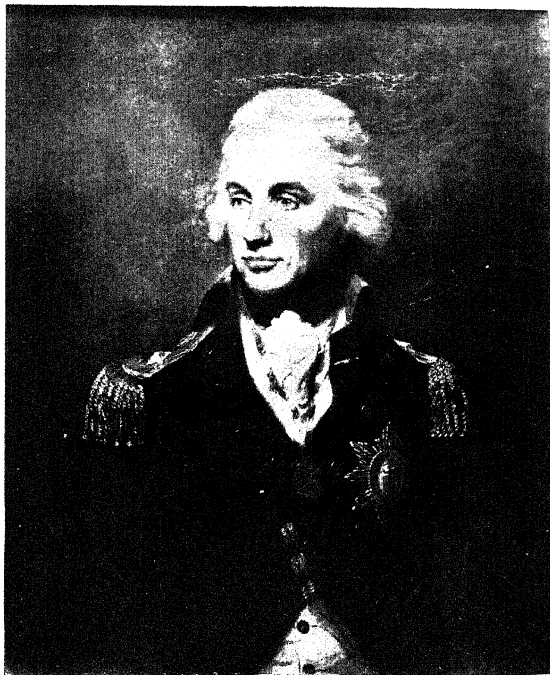
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NELSON IN 1797

On his breast he wears the Star of the Order of the Bath, and round his neck, suspended by a ribbon, the gold medal for the battle of St. Vincent. The portrait was painted soon after Nelson's return from Tenerife. (See below, pp. 43-53.)

# THE LIFE OF NELSON

BY  
GEOFFREY CALLENDER, B.A.  
R.N. COLLEGE, OSBORNE

*WITH MAPS, PLANS AND ILLUSTRATIONS*

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Leaders as dauntless conquer and then depart :  
    Thou art the hero that Britons love best.  
Others to us of their glory may lend a part :  
    Thou art for ever more dear than the rest.  
        Ours is the thunder that burst from thy ships :  
        Ours is the message that fell from thy lips ;  
Ours is the thought of thy gentleness, tender heart;  
    Ours is the empty sleeve pinned to thy breast.

## INTRODUCTION.

### OF BOOKS ABOUT NELSON.

WHEN Southey wrote his *Life of Nelson* just a hundred years ago, he created at once a literary masterpiece and an historical document. His biography is a fine example of word-portraiture. In an effortless manner the artist's hand paints for us the compelling charm of a nation's idol: and his picture still mirrors the panoply of the warrior glancing brightly in the ranks of death. Apart from its glamour the *Life* is an original document in the sense that Ludlow's *Memoirs*, Baillie's *Letters*, and Clarendon's *History of the Great Rebellion* are original authorities. The reader of Southey sees the Napoleonic drama through the eyes of one who was present in the theatre.

And yet, with such claims upon our gratitude Southey's *Nelson* has been irreverently treated. It has been misinterpreted, misunderstood, and put to improper uses. It has been paraded as an impartial history. It has been advertised as a complete biography. It has been sanctioned as a book for the young.

It is not an impartial history. Southey wrote in 1812. The war which he described was not ended till 1815. It was not till 1844 that Sir Harris Nicolas issued the first volume of Nelson's *Dispatches and Letters*, nor till 1846 that he issued the seventh and last. Complete impartiality was not really possible until 1903 when *Nelson and the Neapolitan Jacobins* was issued by the "Navy Records Society". And if we must not expect from Southey an unbiased judgment, still less must we look in his pages for a complete biography. Southey did not profess to explain the tactical side of Nelson's battles or elucidate the strategic meaning of his campaigns. His desire was to write a "manual for the young sailor, which he may carry about with him, till he has treasured up the EXAMPLE in his memory". The appreciative

reader in fact should be moved by the *Life* as he is moved by Shakespeare's *Henry V.* And in passing it may be noticed that among thirty-five different editions of Southey at present on the market it is rare to find a *Nelson* illustrated by plans. Plans are unnecessary; almost impertinent. They would be incongruous in their surroundings. As well edit Shakespeare's history afresh with diagrams of Agincourt. But Nelson's reputation is not based alone on his integrity, his valour, and his patriotism. It is grounded on a genius that taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight, that showed him how to overthrow the most skilful Admirals opposed to him and how to frustrate the most cunning plans that Napoleon himself could frame. And the biography that neglects this side of the subject should never be called complete. But Southey's *Life* is not complete. Nor is its treatment, design, or scope a suitable volume for youthful readers.

Students of Southey and students of English literature will decide for themselves when to read the book. But students of history will be wise if they postpone their acquaintance to a stage later than is usual at present. Nelson was believed by the great Admirals of his own day, by Hood, by Howe, and by St. Vincent to be the greatest seaman that England or the world had ever produced, greater than Drake, greater than Blake, greater even than Hawke. This verdict has been confirmed by every specialist in maritime warfare ever since. Why then is Nelson held in such esteem? Those who would learn should read Sir John Laughton's "Life" and his *Memorial* and his article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Afterwards they should turn to the longer "Life" by Captain Mahan. With the knowledge so obtained they will be able to grasp the true significance of books that illuminate particular aspects or phases of the mighty seaman's career. They will follow with interest the tactics of the last great battle in Mr. Henry Newbolt's *Year of Trafalgar*, in Mr. Julian Corbett's *Campaign of Trafalgar*, and in Mr. J. R. Thursfield's *Nelson and other Naval Studies*. They will value the teaching of Captain Mahan in his *Influence of Sea-Power on the French Revolution*. They will appreciate the intimate revelations of a demonstrative nature in the *Dispatches and Letters* of Sir Harris Nicolas, and they will behold the very man as he appeared to his contemporaries in the *Life* of Robert Southey.

But all these are books for the advanced reader. The more youthful will find in the following pages a short introduction to the study of "Nelson" which, it is hoped, may whet the appetite for fuller knowledge.

## OF THE SHIPS THAT NELSON SAILED IN. HOW THEY WERE BUILT AND HOW ARMED.

Every Briton knows something about fighting ships. The knowledge is born in him. He may not be able to tell at sight a Dreadnought-Cruiser from a Dreadnought. But at least he can distinguish a Dreadnought from a Destroyer and a Destroyer from a Submarine. He will talk too in a quite professional way of conning-towers and casemates as if they were full of meaning for him. But the most intimate acquaintance with the modern navy does not help in the slightest to a proper understanding of Nelson's battles. Such terms as *Seventy-four*, *Corvette*, and *Eighteen-pounder Frigate* are by no process of reckoning convertible into terms of the present day. And the reason is clear enough. Between Nelson's time and our own there has been a change, the like of which has happened only once before in the whole history of the world.

The battleship has entirely altered her method of propulsion.

Until the days of our Tudor Kings the vessel of war was propelled by oars. Sailing-ships there were, but they were nothing accounted of. They were used for conveying troops or carrying trade. The "Long Ship" or "Galley" found them an easy prey. In Henry VIII's day there was a revolution. The British evolved an entirely new type of ship, a ship that was moved by sail and yet could hold her own against a host of galleys. All nations proceeded to build vessels after the British pattern. But the sea-dogs of Devon were first in the field, and laid the firm foundations of our maritime preponderance.

As the sailing-ship drove the galley from the sea, so the steamship has displaced the sailing-ship. The engineering renaissance of the nineteenth century has dropped a curtain between us and the old wooden walls, and reduced our notion of one of Nelson's ships to something almost as hazy as a trireme.

The curtain must here be uplifted for a moment: not that we may study archæology for its own sake, but because without some

knowledge of naval architecture the life of Nelson is incomprehensible.

A visitor to a modern battleship, if he inspected the boilers and engines at all, would probably leave them to the last. But the masts and spars, their counterpart in the old-time ship, demand from us the earliest attention. The *Bowsprit*, lineally descended from the beak or ram of the galley, hesitated for years whether to lie horizontally and serve as an attachment for rigging, or to stand bolt upright and act as one of the masts. A more or less reclining attitude was finally adopted. But a sail was carried as well; a *Spritsail*, small, square-cut and set on the bowsprit's under side, incapable perhaps of the heavy work done by other sails, but useful enough in an emergency. It was furled at the beginning of a battle because its position rendered it liable to get in the way. At the end of an engagement it was sometimes the only sail left and provided the means of retreat.

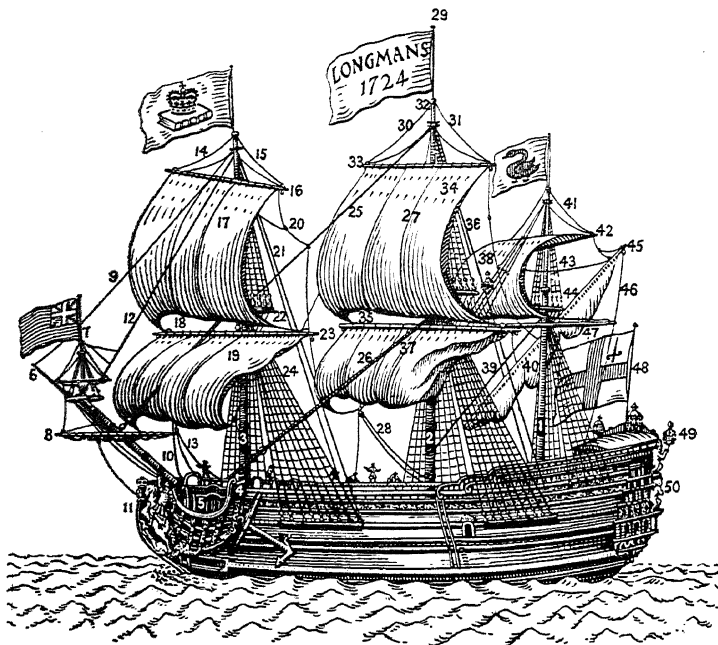
The masts proper were three in number, the *Foremast* (nearest to the bowsprit), the *Main* or principal mast, and the aftermost, the *Mizen*. (PLATES I, II, and VII.) These, though embedded in the very structure of the ship, required above-board additional support against the tugging and uprooting strain of the sails. This support was supplied by hempen rigging. Forward led ropes of great girth called *Stays*\* (PLATE I), and leading aft were corresponding ropes called *Backstays*, though these were only required by upper masts. Then there were a series of stout ropes that led from the mast-head to either side of the ship. These were called *Shrouds*. Criss-crossed by a network of *Ratlines*, which served as a staircase up aloft, the shrouds contributed in no small degree to the picturesqueness of a ship's appearance.

The shrouds were not fastened inboard. To keep them clear of the bulwarks they were firmly attached by means of *blocks* called *Dead-eyes* to roomy wooden platforms outside the ship.

\*The *Mainstay* or forward rigging of the mainmast has passed into a household word as a synonym for "prop" or "support". Many phrases of the old sailing navy have been borrowed in the same way, "shipshape," "off and on," "cut and run," "chock-a-block," "aloof," "above-board," "to the bitter end," "taken aback," "between the devil and the deep sea," "brace of shakes," "on the opposite tack," "to take one's departure," "to take the gilt off the gingerbread".







Several of the more important details of sails and rigging may be seen in this drawing of an eighteenth century ship. She is the device and emblem of Messrs. Longmans. Thomas Longman, the founder of his house, came to London from Bristol in 1716, and bought the business of William Taylor, the publisher of *Robinson Crusoe*. Taylor's business was conducted at the Signs of *The Ship* and of *The Black Swan* in Paternoster Row.

This vessel, it should be observed, is not a man-of-war. Her sides are not pierced for guns. She may serve to remind us that Nelson, in order to gain a thorough knowledge of seamanship, first went to sea in a merchantman.

#### DESCRIPTION.

The ship is just under way with the wind abaft. She has topsails set, and her company make haste to set the fore and main courses. The great lateen sail upon the mizzen is brailed up and the spritsail is still furled. Top-gallant masts and royals are not yet rigged. They will be sent up presently. There are no staysails, so that we get a good view of the rigging.

## KEY

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Mizzen Mast.             | 27. Main Topsail.  |
| 2. Main Mast.               | 28. Main Tack and Weather Sheet<br>(the Sheet leading aft).            |
| 3. Fore Mast.               | 29. Main Truck.  |
| 4. Cathead.                 | 30. Lifts.   |
| 5. Beak-head.               | 31. Main Topmast Crosstrees.   |
| 6. Jib-boom.                | 32. Main Topmast.  |
| 7. Jack-staff.              | 33. Main Topsail Yard.   |
| 8. Spritsail Yard.          | 34. Reef Points.   |
| 9. Jibstay.                 | 35. Main Yard.   |
| 10. Bowsprit.               | 36. Main Topmast Backstays.  |
| 11. Figure Head.            | 37. Main Course.   |
| 12. Fore Topmast Stay.      | 38. Mizzen Topsail.  |
| 13. Fore Tack.              | 39. Mizzen Stay.   |
| 14. Lifts.                  | 40. Lateen Yard and Sail (afterwards<br>replaced by Spanker and Gaff). |
| 15. Fore Topmast.           | 41. Lifts.   |
| 16. Fore Topsail Yard.      | 42. Mizzen Topsail Yard.   |
| 17. Fore Topsail.           | 43. Mizzen Topsail Braces.   |
| 18. Fore Yard               | 44. Mizzen Top.  |
| 19. Fore Sail or Course.    | 45. Mizzen Peak.   |
| 20. Braces.                 | 46. Peak Halliards.  |
| 21. Fore Topmast Backstays. | 47. Cross-Jack Yard.   |
| 22. Fore Top.               | 48. Ensign Staff.  |
| 23. Yard Arm.               | 49. Poop Lantern.  |
| 24. Shrouds and Ratlines.   | 50. Quarter Gallery.   |
| 25. Main Topmast Stay.      |  |
| 26. Main Stay.              |  |

These platforms were properly termed *Channels*, but were more often called *Chains*, from the fetters that bound them to the vessel's side. (PLATE IV.) Shrouds and stays were classed as "standing rigging" to distinguish them from "running" gear, such as "halyards," "braces," "clew-garnets," and "sheets"—tackle used to hoist or furl a sail or trim it when in position.

Each mast, or (to be precise) each lower mast could by additional masts be extended skywards; extended not as a telescope is extended, nor yet as a fishing rod, but on the same system of detachable pieces. (PLATES I and IX.) Mounting upwards these spars were called *Topmast*, *Topgallant mast*, and *Royal*. Each mast had its own appropriate rigging.\* And each mast had its *Yard* and its *Sail*. The sails will call for separate treatment presently. The yards were slung across the masts, sometimes by ropes, sometimes by chains, to spread and extend the sails. (PLATES I, VII, and IX.) Yards and sails alike took their names from the masts. The main topmast carried the main topsail and the main topsail was spread on the main topsail yard.

The spars of a ship together with their ligaments were to a sailing man-of-war what his limbs are to a swordsman. It is not necessary to cut off both his arms and legs to put a duellist out of action. A thrust through the forearm will suffice. So with a ship in Nelson's day. The vessel that lost a mast entire was in very evil plight. She was reduced to the same extremity as a duellist with only one leg. The ship that lost a single topmast was gravely, nay dangerously wounded. The ship that lost a single yard was heavily handicapped. Robbed of a portion of her motive power she stood to lose the battle. If weaker than her enemy in other respects, she could be overhauled and taken; if mightier, she could no longer pursue with very much hope of success.

This had to be borne in mind when fighting against the French. For the French did not care for a *mêlée* at close quarters. They fired at their foe from long-distance range. And although this involved a high elevation of their guns, yet if the aim was good the shots did their damage up aloft. And here the tapering of the spars rendered them particularly liable to be broken.

\* The topmast shrouds were spread by the *Tops*, big wooden platforms at the head of the lower masts. (PLATES I and IX.) These served also as points of vantage for sharp-shooters and grenade-throwers, see below, p. 137.

A storm of wind, of course, would often do more mischief than a whole squadron of Frenchmen. This Nelson found in 1798 when he was watching Toulon in the *Vanguard*.

The fracture of a yard or a topmast involved some sail in ruin. The sails, moreover, were subject to calamities from which the yards and topmasts were free. They could be torn, split, rent, and gashed. (PLATE IV.) And their size made them an easy target. In a ship like the *Victory* the biggest sail, the main topsail, was over 4500 square feet. The three lower sails (or *Courses*) together measured 10,500 square feet. And the total sail area, when topgallants and royals were set, would have covered 25,000 square feet, or a surface larger than Oxford Circus.

It may be imagined what a ship of war suffered if she put herself into a position where the enemy could *rake* her: that is, if she presented an "end-on" view to the enemy's broadside, and allowed the whole of the enemy's fire to sweep her from stern to stem or stem to stern. After Trafalgar the *Victory's* fore topsail was returned into store at Chatham. A careful sketch was made of it, and it was found to contain well over two hundred holes; neat cleavages made by a cannon ball, disfiguring gashes made by langridge; small rents some inches wide, and gaping windows big enough for a man on horseback to leap through.

And there was no resistance in a sail. The raking shot might conceivably pass through all three topsails in succession.

The warship must not be pictured as always dressed in a full suit of sails. The amount of canvas carried depended on wind and weather. "Foresail and topsails" was a common enough rig. In time of battle the "courses" were furled. When the wind gathered strength the sails were clewed up and shortened by means of reefs.\*

The topsail-yards point to the wind, boys,  
See all clear to reef each course;  
Let the foresheet go, don't mind, boys,  
Though the weather should prove worse.  
Fore and aft the sprit-sail yard get,  
Reef the mizen, see all clear,  
Hands up, each preventer-brace set,  
Man the fore-yard! Cheer, boys, cheer!

\* The *Reef-points* or little ropes by means of which a part of the sail was gathered in and tied round the yard may be seen in PLATES I and IX.

In addition to the square-sails, there were others of which mention has yet to be made. Triangular-sails—the largest of them over 2000 square feet—were set, not upon spars, but on the stays. These were from their position known as *Staysails*: but the foremost of them came to be known as the *Jib*, a nautical word which may be translated “self-trimmer” And then there were the *Studding-sails* or *Stun-sails*. These were lateral extensions of certain of the square-sails; side-curtains, as it were, set upon booms which were pushed through heavy iron rings fastened to the yard-arm. (PLATE IX.)

The principal sail set upon the mizen mast calls for a word of notice. It was called the *Spanker* or *Driver*. It was not square-cut. It was a fore-and-aft sail like the sails of a modern schooner or cutter.\* Its shape was inherited from the lateen rig of the aftermost sail in early Tudor warships. With certain modifications this shape was retained, because like the fore-and-aft rig of a modern yacht it held a better wind and so assisted the vessel to answer her helm. The Tudor warship did not set a square topsail on the mizen. When this was added the foot of the sail could not be spread on a lateen yard. A spar peculiar to the mizen topsail was therefore introduced. It carried no sail of its own and was called the *Cross-Jack Yard*.†

If a ship wished to come to a temporary stop, she proceeded to *heave to*. She threw one of her principal sails *aback*. She so placed it that it no longer bellied out and held the wind. On the contrary. It pressed itself backward, flat against the mast. In this way it defeated the efforts of the other sails and the ship remained almost motionless.

But it was in movement that the old ship looked her best. No creation of man can ever have been quite so wonderful to gaze upon as a three-decker with a fair wind abaft; her piled-up swollen canvas gleaming like a great cloud-castle against the blue of heaven, and her graceful bows breasting the envious waves as they leapt along her polished sides.

\* Hence the term “Mizen” (Italian *mezzana*), having its canvas amidships.

† Pronounced *Crow-Jeck*. For the earlier mizen set on a lateen yard see PLATE I, and for the spanker see PLATE XII.

Hark ! the whistle is heard.  
" All hands " is the word.  
Bustle, bustle, boys ! Up and away !  
Lo, the anchor is free,  
The ship swings to sea.  
Hurray ! for old England, hurray !

When the breeze was a following breeze, when the ship sped westward before an easterly gale, she was said to be *going free* or *sailing large*. The pace, of course, must seem slow to those who live in an age of steam and of internal combustion engines, but the sailing man-of-war with a favourable breeze could be relied upon to make six or seven knots an hour, and the vessels that were purposely built for speed very often exceeded eleven. Not that it was necessary to have the wind immediately astern. The ship would move forward when the wind was on her side.

But let us for a moment imagine ourselves on board. The quartermaster at the wheel looking right ahead towards the prow has on his right the *Starboard* side of the ship and on his left the *Larboard* or *Port*. Now suppose that we are sailing due west as Nelson sailed when he crossed the Atlantic in pursuit of Villeneuve. If it blows direct from the north we say that the wind is on our starboard *Beam*, that is, upon our right-hand side where the breadth of the vessel is greatest. If the breeze blows from the north-east, we say that it is on our starboard *Quarter* : for the "quarter" of a vessel is situated between the mainmast and the stern. Or suppose that we are sailing due west and the wind is midway between north-east and north. Then we speak of the breeze as being two *Points* abaft the starboard beam.

A vessel sailing west with the wind at north would be said to be advancing on the starboard *Tack*.\* All vessels farther south than herself would occupy a leeward position. They would lie under her lee. But all vessels farther north would "have the wind of her". They would occupy the "windward berth". They would have the "weather gage".

No sailing-ship can advance in the very teeth of the wind. Even the modern yacht must keep a respectful distance. When

\* Conversely, a vessel sailing west with the wind at south would be advancing on the port or larboard tack. If two ships bound opposite ways were to meet, they would pass "on opposite tacks".

the wind is "abeam" the ship's head is removed eight *points* from it, eight, that is, of the thirty-two compass points. If she is advancing west and the wind is north, she is eight points from the wind. If she changes her course to W. by N., then she is seven points from the wind. No man-of-war in the sailing epoch could sail within six points of the wind, and the great majority could not lie within seven.\*

Suppose that the wind was "dead foul". Suppose that Nelson desired to go west and the wind was blowing from the west. What would he do? He would sail *Close-hauled* or as near to the wind as possible: and he would change from one course to another. He would first advance on the "Port Tack," that is, with the wind on the left side of his ship. And in this direction he could steer a course N.N.W., that is, two points or  $22\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  to the west of north. Then to avoid going too far out of his way, he would *put his helm down* and go about.†

The wind would now be on his right side and he would proceed on the "Starboard Tack" to the S.S.W. Thus slow and sure progress would be made in the right direction though the journey would be long and wearisome, plying to windward, beating against the wind.

Now let us turn from sails and compass-points to consider the internal economy of an old-time ship. And first her armament.

The naval gun was a muzzle-loading weapon made of iron. It was stout at the breech to resist the force of the explosion and tapered away towards the mouth. It was cast in a single piece and afterwards bored. On either side of it, and nearer the breech than the muzzle to keep the balance true, were twin arms or projections called *Trunnions*. These served to support the ordnance on its truck. The truck was in shape like a cigar-box with lid gone and ends knocked out. It was as strong as oak and iron

\* One *point* =  $11^{\circ} 15'$ . The battleship required that the angle subtended by the line of the direction of the wind and the line of the ship's advance should be not less than  $67\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ .

† If he "put his helm up" and turned the stern of his ship to the wind he would not *Tack*. He would be said to *Wear* his ship. This manœuvre was sometimes necessary and sometimes useful, but it always meant a loss of room to leeward.

NOTE.—To *BEAR UP* is to put the helm *up*.

To *LUFF* is to put the helm *down*.

could make it, and was mounted on wooden wheels. At the breech end of the truck its sides were cut away in steps. By the help of these and stout wooden crows called *Handspikes*, the gunners were able to raise the breech and so depress the muzzle. When raised, the breech was kept in its place by a triangular wedge moved along the bed or floor of the truck. If it was thought desirable to aim at masts and spars, the process was reversed. Handspikes were inserted again and the "coin" or wedge drawn back.

Thus cannon shoot the higher pitches  
The lower you let down their breeches.

Another material part of the casting was the pomelion, a great rounded projection at the back of the gun. To this was fixed the *Breeching*, a mighty rope whose ends were lashed to the sides of the ship on either side of the gun-port. The breeching took the recoil. And such was the force to be withstood that the stoutest rope procurable was often broken as if it were thread.

The recoil brought the gun back into a position ready for loading. The bore was cleaned with an instrument like a giant corkscrew called a "worm," and a damp stopper-headed mop called a "sponge". A cartridge of powder, a shot and wads were then ladled in and rammed home with a rammer, and the hardest work of all began. The gun-crew, by means of ropes and pulleys which they called "gun-tackle," proceeded to haul the cannon out with its nose through the port. This done, they took what precautions they could to avoid being killed by the recoil, and the captain of the team stepped forward, cleared out the vent with a priming iron, inserted a quill or tube filled with powder kneaded in spirits of wine, and kindling his match into flame fixed it to the end of a linstock and applied it to the vent. In many of the English ships a flint-lock took the place of the match. It was found to save much time and it certainly proved less risky.

All guns were made after the same model and fought in a similar fashion. But they differed considerably in size. There was the *Six-pounder* gun, which threw a solid iron ball weighing six pounds. There was the *Nine-pounder*, the *Twelve-pounder*, the *Eighteen-pounder*, the *Twenty-four-pounder*, and the *Thirty-two-pounder*. The last named was the seaman's pride, and the largest weapon carried afloat. A gun of this size or nearly this size was



used by Drake and Howard against the Armada. A gun of this size was used by Sir Charles Napier in the Crimean War. Larger guns could have been made. But the "thirty-two-pounder" weighed three and a half tons. And this in all conscience was heavy enough for human arms to work. As it was, after a long battle the gunners fell down beside their guns, dead-tired with the labour of moving them.

"Thirty-two-pounders" were by the seamen generally called "Long Nines". They were nine feet long. They cost £50 apiece and took seven days to make. At extreme range they carried a mile and a half. There were no adjustable sights as in modern artillery. But the gunners had a rule of thumb. They aimed for certain traditional points amid the rigging and spars and so delivered their shot upon the hull with the nicest accuracy. Each gun required a team of fourteen men. The ball was six inches in diameter and, as it could penetrate five feet of oak, the two feet of a ship's side offered little protection at close quarters.

The racking strain upon the sides of a wooden ship occasioned by a score and a half of plunging guns made it impossible to employ the ponderous "Long Nines" elsewhere than on the Lower-Deck. This was in consequence known as the *Gun-Deck*. Its level was not many feet above the surface of the sea. Thus when ships heeled over in a high wind those to windward could hardly use their heaviest guns lest by opening the gun-ports they admitted enough water to swamp them. On the other hand, the vessels to leeward exposed as they rolled certain parts of the hull which should have been submerged. And in this way they rendered themselves liable to the most fatal of blows, a shot *between wind and water*.

It was upon a basis of guns and gun-power that the rating of warships was based. *Ships of the Line*, that is to say, ships that were strong enough to stand in the line of battle, "battleships" as they would be called to-day, may be grouped into two main divisions. There were GREAT ships and there were LESSER ships. If the great ship had one hundred guns or more, she was known as a *First-Rate*. The *Victory* was a First-Rate. She had one hundred guns.\* On the other hand, if the guns were numerous

\* Some of the old thirty-two-pounders are still to be seen mounted on the *Victory's* lower-deck.

and yet their number fell below a hundred, then the ship was known as a *Second-Rate*.

Nowadays the ideal of a great naval power is to have all ships "big" ships. But this consummation was never aimed at by the architect of Nelson's day. And for good reasons. So long as the ship was made of wood, it was quite impossible to increase beyond a certain limit its length from stem to stern. And therefore any material increase in the number of guns involved an increase of height from gunwale to waterline, of "free-board" as it is called. The First-Rate was a "three-decker". The Second-Rate was a "three-decker". The three-decker's additional guns gave her an almost irresistible force. At the battle of St. Vincent Jervis in the *Victory* held his own quite easily against two or three two-decked ships. But apart from sheer strength and concentration of gun-fire the three-decker was unequal to the lesser ships. She sailed less well. She was less handy in manœuvring. She made considerable leeway. And she was obliged to carry nearly 400 tons of ballast to counterbalance the increased top weights.\* The three-decker, in short, was the ideal ship to carry a flag. She offered what proved nine times out of ten an impregnable bulwark for an admiral.

But the staple ship of war in the olden time was not the First-Rate nor yet the Second-Rate, but the *Third-Rate*. This may be proved at once by a glance at the figures in any important fight. At Quiberon Hawke had twenty-three ships. Nineteen of them were third-rates. At the Saints Rodney had thirty-six ships. Thirty-one of them were third-rates. At St. Vincent Jervis had fifteen ships. Nine of them were third-rates. All Nelson's ships at the Nile were third-rates.† At Trafalgar there were nineteen British third-rates among the twenty-seven engaged.

There were two kinds of Third-Rate. There was the *Seventy-four* and the *Sixty-four*. The first battleship that Nelson ever commanded was a sixty-four—his best-loved *Agamemnon*. The sixty-four was inferior to the seventy-four in more than the mere number of her guns. She mounted twenty-four-pounders on her

\* A ship of the line required more than five fathoms of water in which to float with safety. See below, pp. 66 and 90.

† The *Leander* was not. But the *Leander* had only fifty guns and was not properly a ship of the line.

lower-deck and twelve-pounders on her main. But the seventy-four mounted thirty-two-pounders on her gun-deck and eighteen-pounders on her main-deck. The seventy-four in short was the finest, the best, and the handiest ship afloat. She was the type, the emblem, the beau-ideal of a battleship. And she was a "two-decker".

A deck when spoken of in connexion with guns must not be thought of as a platform. It was a room complete with floor and ceiling. A three-decker had therefore four tiers of guns, the fourth being mounted on the roof of the third floor. A single-decked frigate had two tiers of guns; and even a corvette had a single tier though she possessed in reality no deck at all. A seventy-four disposed her guns as follows: she mounted twenty-eight on the gun-deck, fourteen on either broadside, and twenty-eight on the main-deck, similarly arranged. The remaining eighteen were on the upper-deck, twelve of them on the quarter-deck, and six on the fore-castle.

First-rates, second-rates, and third-rates were all of them built and armed for battle. But the *Frigate* was built and designed for speed. She corresponded to what is nowadays called the "Cruiser". Her duty was to wait upon the admiral, to minister to his needs, to gather information concerning the enemy's whereabouts, to carry messages, and to safeguard the merchant-men. The largest frigate was not much more than a quarter the size of the *Victory*. Yet she carried two-thirds of the *Victory's* canvas. She skimmed over the water like a swallow, and so long as she did not allow herself to venture within reach of a battleship she travelled with safety everywhere, for her speed was protection enough.

Half a dozen frigates were even in combination no match for a ship of the line. And therefore the frigate took no share in the actual cut and thrust of battle. Like the *Euryalus* at Trafalgar, she was generally busy till the very last moment. But, her duties done, she generally lay on the disengaged side of her own line, so that she might remain out of harm's way and yet be ready when occasion offered to tender her services, succour the distressed, or dart away with dispatches.

But it must not be supposed that the frigate had no occasion to use her guns. When she was gathering information for the

admiral, when she was boldly imperilling herself in hostile waters, when she was spying into the enemy's ports, and above all when she was convoying a fleet of merchantmen, she was particularly liable to come into conflict with the enemy's vessels of her own size. A duel between battleships was the rarest thing imaginable. Jervis had one such. But Jervis was a sailor of exceptional experience. Among frigates the contrary was the case. Frigate duels in time of war were events of almost daily occurrence.

It was therefore of importance that a frigate should be as stoutly armed as possible so long as the improvement in her armament did not diminish her speed. Twenty-four or twenty-eight guns were not unusual in a frigate. But there were others larger in size. There was the frigate of thirty-two guns and the frigate of thirty-six. In such craft the largest gun employed was seldom anything more fearful than a twelve-pounder. Later in time a more effective ship was evolved. And this was called an "Eighteen-pounder Frigate".

Some captains were frigate-captains from choice and others from compulsion. Lord Exmouth was never so happy as in a little ship. He was a born frigate-commander. Dundonald with a broadside that he could carry in his pocket made his name ring round the world. But with Nelson it was different. He longed for his first battleship. He dreamed of the time when he should command a fleet. And yet during the first thirty-five years of his life the lordliest ship that carried his pendant was a vessel of twenty-eight guns.

One or two small craft call for a passing reference. The *Fifty* was an "intermediate" ship.\* Properly she served as commodore in a detachment or squadron of frigates. Sometimes it might happen that she was called upon to bear her part among battleships. The *Leander* played a prominent part in the battle of the Nile.

The *Sloop* was a little bit of a thing, smaller than the smallest frigate.

The *Bomb-ketch* (PLATE II) was designed to accommodate the Mortar, a weapon whose vertical fire made it before all others the most effective weapon for use against towns. The mortar-

\* Like an armoured cruiser of to-day.

boat was very stoutly built and broad of beam. She was often stuffed with junk and shakings to counteract the downward recoil of her guns. These weapons were of no use at a distance, but range being no object they hurled a missile deadlier far than anything the heaviest gun could manage.\* And the terrors of a bombardment were by no means diminished when the horrible projectiles, ugly enough already, came hurtling downwards through the air like a shower of meteorites.

Before we return to our boat and row ashore let us take a look round the ship and examine her internal economy. We will suppose that we are on board a three-decker (PLATE XII).† We will first take our stand upon the *Poop*. Here we are placed at the very stern of the ship and on the very roof of it. Three bulky objects, almost as large as garden summer-houses, meet our view. They are the stern lanterns. (PLATES I and IV.) They were lit in the olden days by many candles. And trailing over the taffrail is the Ensign, flying from the ensign-staff. No ordinary flag this, but a banner requiring 800 square feet of bunting. Now if we turn round with face towards the prow we have just that view of the ship presented by Orchardson's picture of Napoleon mournfully gazing towards Ushant as the *Bellerophon* carries him from Rochefort to England. (PLATE XI.) Napoleon's companions in captivity stand round the mizen-mast, and young Las Cases leans over the poop-rail. On our right are the starboard bulwarks. Leading from aloft are the main and mizen shrouds. The main course is set. The running rigging with blocks may be seen, and the slack of ropes coiled up. Some officer has left his perspective glass—a poor instrument compared with modern telescopes—on the skylight. The skylight looks down into the Captain's cabin.

To reach the Captain's cabin we must descend from the poop ;

\* There was a howitzer-like gun resembling the mortar used on the upper-deck of battleships. It was made at the Carron iron-works in Scotland, and was in consequence called a *Carronade*.

† The *Victory* has been much altered since Nelson's day. She is painted differently. Her beak-head has been removed. Her upper-deck has been completely changed. Scuttles have been pierced to light the cockpit. And her towering masts, her giant spars, her heavy shrouds have been replaced by ludicrously dwarfish substitutes.

and when we reach the foot of the steps we are on the *Quarter-deck*. Notice in the picture the quarter-deck guns. Above them is a trough called the *Hammock-nettings*. Every man's hammock is rolled up neatly, tied up tightly, and stowed here tidily. When night comes the bos'n will pipe them down and they will be slung on a deck below. If it comes on to blow and rain descends a tarpaulin cover will keep them dry. Under the break of the poop is the wheel. This in reality is a revolving barrel actuated by two spoked wheels on its ends. Round it are raw-hide bands that lead downward to the tiller. Before it stands the *Compass* in the Binnacle. The quarter-deck is the domain of the officers. It is sacrosanct. Every one coming on board must raise his hand to salute it. The starboard side is reserved for the Admiral or in a seventy-four for the Captain. Here he stands in the heat of battle, issuing orders, directing the fight.

When we reach the forward end of the quarter-deck we find ourselves cut off from the fore-castle by a great gulf. This is the *Waist*. On either side of it, however, there are narrow platforms or rather gratings called *Gangways*. Along these we may safely venture. But let us pause midway and look across to the other side of the ship. Slung over the chasm between gangway and gangway is a collection of spare spars, topmasts, topgallants and yards. And resting on the spars are the ship's boats, the *Long-boat*, *Pinnace*, and *Barge*.\*

Now let us leave the gangway and mount the *Fore-castle*. Once upon a time there was really a castle here, which frowned majestically upon a stern-castle opposite and played havoc with boarders who entered the waist. But that was in the days of Bluff King Hal. Now there are only the guns and the name for reminder. But there are other objects of interest on the fore-castle. There is the ship's bell in its belfry. It has a large clapper which the sentry grasps when he makes the hours. And there are the *Bitts*, great timber frames round which the ropes are bent. The fore-castle is roughly square. At the two after-corners are the steps up which we have come. At each fore-corner is a *Cat-head*. (PLATES I and IV.) A cat-head is a strong wooden pro-

\* Three smaller boats, the *Jolly-boat*, *Cutter*, and *Gig*, are hung by davits over the sides of the ship.

jection, furnished with sheaves or pulleys by means of which the anchor is lifted from the water clear of the vessel's bows after being heaved to the surface. A powerful purchase is needed, for the anchor is of a formidable size, as a visit to Southsea will testify. For there on the beach the *Victory's* anchor still marks the spot where Nelson embarked when he sailed for Trafalgar Bay.

The Fo'c's'le as every one knows is to the common seamen what the quarter-deck is to officers. It is their outdoor haunt, their pleasaunce under the sky. Here of an evening many a happy hour is spent when the ship speeds on her way through sunny latitudes. The smooth sea hardly seems to stir. The rigid sails swell out before the constant breeze. There is hardly a sound save for the low murmur of the water washing against the side. And the melody of this accompaniment prompts the sea-song and chanty and gives occasion for thrice-told tales.

From the forecastle there are steps that descend into the *Beak-head*. (PLATE IX.) Inwardly this is little more than a floor thrust forward for the convenience of those whose duty it is to reef and furl the canvas set upon the bowsprit. But outwardly the beak-head with its rich gilt-fretted sides is one of the most striking features of the ship. It forms the canopy and throne of the figure-head. (PLATE I.)

We must now leave the upper deck and visit the uppermost of the gun-decks. This is the *Main-deck*. Note the long row of guns on either side. The carriages and the sides of the ship are painted red so that in action the blood may not show. In the ordinary ship, the seventy-four, this deck would be absent. Let us pass right aft and see its distinctive feature at once. Right in the stern is the Admiral's cabin. It is separated from the rest of the deck by wooden partitions called bulkheads. There is a door. Let us push it open and enter. (PLATE V.) The room, it must be admitted, is not imposing. There is a carpet on the floor. There is a table and a chair or two. There are one or two pegs for hats and cloaks, a rack for telescope and sword, and a locker for stores and wine. But the walls of the cabin are just the bare ribs of the ship. There are windows. Real windows with real glass. They open inwards and are fastened by a clamp against the ceiling. They stretch right

across the width of the room. Altogether very attractive. Admiral Lord Howe when he gave up the sea had a room in his house fitted up like a state-room. It made him think he was once more at sea. But of course all this glass makes the stern of the ship very fragile and weak. (PLATES IV and VII.) If an enemy could pour a broadside into us there would be little of us left. Outside the window is a gallery where the admiral may walk in the open air and take his pleasure without interruption. In just such a room as this Lord Nelson took wine with his captains on the eve of Copenhagen. In just such a room he explained to them the Trafalgar "Memorandum".

Now once again to the hatchway. We descend to the *Middle-deck*. This is before all the workaday deck. It is like the cloister in an old monastery. Every man not engaged above board carries on his duties here. Here between the avenue of guns the place is busy as a hive. The carpenter's mates ply their hammer and axe. The sailmakers fit new bolt-ropes to the sails or add neat patches. Right forward is the *Galley* where the cook prepares the messes. The cook is a very popular person. For although the food is not good, every one knows that it is not his fault. The galley floor is made of brick, and the funnel goes up through the decks to appear again on the forecastle. The danger of a conflagration is so appalling that the galley fire must be extinguished the moment the meal is prepared. Into the galley go all those who desire to smoke. One might suppose that there would scarcely be room seeing that a three-decker carries 850 men. But then you see a sailor-man seldom smokes. He chews his quid "like a Christian".

Right aft of this deck is the "Ward Room," where the senior officers have their quarters. Here when not on duty will be found the First Lieutenant, the Second, the Third, the Fourth, the Captain of Marines, the Chaplain, the Surgeon, and the Master. The First Lieutenant is a very great personage. He is the Captain's shadow. The Master also is a very distinguished officer. He ranks next to the First Lieutenant. He is responsible for the navigation of the ship. He keeps the charts. He lays the ship's course. He must know in what direction to steer so as to keep the ship on the right track. His mates are known as Quarter-masters. There is always one by the wheel to "con" or direct the steering. The master must avoid dangers from fog, collision,



shoals, and storms. He must determine the ship's position. This he does by observation of the sun, moon, and stars, or by calculating how far he has run from a previous position. His observations are taken with a sextant. His calculation is made by "heaving the log". A "dead reckoning" he calls it.

The masters have played their part in history. Benbow was a master. He rose to be an admiral and died fighting for his country. Captain Cook the great explorer also was at one time a master. He navigated up the St. Lawrence the fleet that captured Quebec.

Now let us descend once more. This time we find ourselves on the *Gun-deck* among the heaviest artillery. Thirty-two pounders to starboard and thirty-two pounders to port. Along the length of the deck sprawls something which looks like a measureless sea-serpent from the depths of the sea. It is the *Cable*. Its giant girth of twenty-five inches is not too stout to hold the great ship to her anchor, for a three-decker like this displaces 4000 tons. Midway between the foremast and the main is the *Capstan*. Great exertions are needed to heave it round when the capstan-bars are shipped, because the vessel must first be brought over her anchor, and the anchor before it is weighed must be broken from the ground.\*

The gun-deck is the beamiest and broadest deck. And it needs to be, for it is here that the men are quartered. Here they mess, slinging their tables between the guns from a hook in the beams above. And here at night when the hammocks are piped down they sleep the sleep of the just.

Right aft of this deck is the Gun-room, where the junior officers resort. The autocrat of the gun-room is the Gunner, who is quartered here so that he may throw a fatherly eye over the youngsters. The Gunner like the Master is a Warrant Officer. He has a load of cares. Besides looking after the young gentlemen he takes charge of every weapon on board. It is his fault if a breeching fails. It is his fault if there is a rammer missing. Every gun must be kept scrupulously clean, and there must always be sufficient powder from the casks made up into cartridges. He is a busy man, the Gunner. The Quarter-Gunners are his mates.

\* Though a single anchor may hold her safely a ship of the line has seldom less than four: the "best bower," "little bower," "sheet anchor," and "spare". There is a capstan on the middle-deck also.

We are now almost on a level with the water-line. And when we descend from the gun-deck to the *Orlop*, we are below the water-line. Consequently we are in the region of artificial light. The artificial light is very bad. It is supplied by tallow candles. There are shadows in the orlop that are quite impenetrable. In the after part of this deck are the Midshipmen's Berths. But in time of battle the midshipmen must shift their quarters and sling their hammocks where they can. For when the cannons begin to leap and roar the after part of the orlop serves as hospital. It is the *Cockpit*. (PLATE X.) Here under the feeble lantern glow the surgeons carry out their grisly task. It is strange to think of the contrast afforded by the cockpit in war and the cockpit in peace. In the piping times all is throbbing vitality. All is lively hubbub. The youngest members of the community are nothing if not gay and boisterous. And every one talks at once. In war the sounds are different. There are shrieks from those who are maddened by pain. There are curses from those who cannot endure in silence. Each man as he is brought from above is laid upon a sail. Never mind how serious his wound, he must wait his turn. Some rave. Some cry like little children. The most heroic rave unconsciously.

Let us go forward.

The rest of the orlop is the sanctum of more than one warrant officer. First among these is the Boatswain. His business is to look after the sails, rigging, canvas, colours, anchors, blocks, cables, and cordage: but oddly enough not the boats. He is hampered with much gear. But nothing disturbs him. He has a place for everything and can put his hand on it, even if it be but a marline-spike. He is the neatest of men and the most punctual. He is the model of all that seamen should be. He is their living example. Round his neck he wears a silver chain and at the end of it the badge of his office—the whistle. It is extraordinary what things he can make this whistle say. "All hands!" "Haul away!" "Avast!" "Hands down from aloft!" "Ease the ropes!" "Walk back!" "Belay!"\* He pipes the side when the captain comes on board. He pipes to dinner or supper. He has

\* To belay is to twine the end of running rigging round a "cleat" or a belaying-pin fixed in the "Fife-rail". (PLATE XI.)

mates who fly to do his bidding with a "Tumble up! D'ye hear? D'ye hear?"

The Purser like the Bos'n has a store on the orlop. He keeps the supplies of flour and oatmeal, of beef and pork, of butter and cheese. He controls the buttery and larder. He is not a popular person. For he is held responsible, not without cause perhaps, for the badness of the food. He keeps the dry-goods too. If a seaman is out at heel or out at elbow, he must go to the purser for "slops," and the purser will dock a moiety off his pay. The purser keeps the register of every man on board and knows exactly what is due to each. He may be a good man and an honest. But the tars cannot conquer their dislike for him. To them he is an exciseman and a tax-gatherer; a robber, a cutpurse, a salesman with exorbitant charges.

With the Bos'n and the Purser dwells the Carpenter, or keeper of the boats and spars. Here on the orlop he keeps his tools, his adzes, his saws, and his chisels. He is a good fellow. But he has not quite the status of the other two.

We will not go down into the *Hold*. It is full of evil odours. The ballast is there, and there are the water-tanks. Spare cable is kept there and fresh suits of sails. The beef and pork are stored there in casks and other supplies in boxes. The most interesting parts of the hold are the *Powder-magazines*. There are two of them, one forward, one aft. A marine sentry stands outside each magazine. He has orders to deal summarily with anyone who pays an unwarranted visit. The greatest care is always taken. The door is locked by special locks and the Captain keeps the keys. When the Gunner and his mates come here on duty they put felt slippers on their feet. The place is lighted by a special room, with a glazed window opposite the door of the magazine. In action the approaches are covered by a blanket sodden with water.

Meanwhile our boat still swings alongside. We must climb to the upper deck again and row ourselves ashore.

OF NAVAL WARS IN NELSON'S LIFETIME PRIOR TO  
THE BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT.

Nelson was born at a critical moment in his country's history. The Seven Years' War was in progress. And from the first everything had gone wrong. Byng had failed to relieve Minorca. Minorca had been lost. Byng had been peremptorily ordered home, and shot "to encourage the others". Still there was no improvement. Hanover was surrendered. The British colonists in America were worsted. From India came news of the Black Hole. Britain's honour was tarnished. Her prestige broken.

In 1757 came a ray of hope. There was a little skirmish off Cap François in the West Indies. Seven French sail engaged three British. The Britons not only held their own. They had the best of the struggle. One of them was the *Dreadnought*, and her commander was Captain Suckling. The date was the twenty-first of October.

In the following year Captain Suckling was honoured by the arrival into the world of a new nephew. The babe was christened Horatio Nelson.

From this moment the war took a new turn. A "Cargo of Courage," which contained the dashing Hawke, and the imperturbable Saunders, sailed to the Mediterranean and re-established their country's reputation. One of the mightiest French vessels afloat, the swift-footed *Foudroyant*, was captured by an insignificant little English ship less than half her size. The tide had turned.

The next year, 1759, was the *Year of Victories*. Saunders and Wolfe captured Quebec. Boscawen caught the French Mediterranean fleet on its way through the Straits of Gibraltar and burnt it off Lagos in Portugal. Rodney destroyed at Havre a flotilla of flat-bottomed boats intended for the invasion of England. And Hawke brought the year to a triumphant conclusion by destroying the last fleet of France on a dark November afternoon among the rocks and shoals of Quiberon.

In such stirring times was Nelson cradled. Twenty years later his country was involved in the disastrous "War of American Independence" (1775-83). England was in a state of utter unpreparedness. And to gain their own ends the powers of Europe threw in their lot with America. The dashing Keppel, Hawke's favourite captain,

was now the doyen of the service. He engaged the French at the battle of Ushant. But his spirited attack proved unavailing. The ill-found fleet with which he was provided was quite inadequate. The Government as in the case of Byng called him home to take his trial. The country, however, was up in arms on his behalf and became hysterical with joy at his acquittal. He shook the dust from his feet and retired.

The Channel fleet, left without a head, maintained for the rest of the war a strictly defensive attitude; poor-spirited, irresolute, ineffectual. It was, however, at this time that one of its captains, known to the world as Kempenfelt, and to intimate friends as "*Kempy*," laid the foundations of a far-reaching reform which revolutionized the art of fighting at sea. Hitherto signals had been made with a separate flag for each message. "*Kempy*" invented a "numeral code" whereby one ship was able to talk to another with something approaching the ease of to-day.

Meanwhile the theatre of war shifted. The French, who had lost North America in the previous war, determined in this to establish instead an empire in the West Indies. They resolved to take for themselves the whole of the Leeward and the whole of the Windward Isles. It was an ambitious project. And so they found it at first. For their earliest opponent, Admiral Barrington, a disciple of Keppel and Hawke, seized their invaluable possession of St. Lucia, and planting himself firmly in the Grand Cul de Sac held his own against overwhelming odds. But in course of time he was relieved by Admiral Byron, who fought the French in a pitched battle off Grenada and suffered a most unfortunate and most untimely reverse. Following so quickly on the ill-success at Ushant, this disaster seemed to proclaim that Britain somehow had lost her innate faculty for winning victories at sea.

The West Indian Islands fell rapidly. Paul Jones the privateer terrorized British shipping in their own waters. Gibraltar, beset by land and sea, cried aloud for help: and cried in vain. There were not enough ships with which to compose a Mediterranean squadron.

The clouds of misfortune were for a time dispersed by gallant Admiral Rodney. Putting himself at the head of the discredited Channel fleet he sailed for the Straits, fought and defeated the Spaniards in a moonlight battle off Cape St. Vincent, rescued

Gibraltar, put new heart into Minorca, sent home the Channel fleet before its absence had been noticed, crossed the Atlantic and brought the French to battle off Martinique. Here he conquered again: but not as decisively as he wished. He threw much of the blame on his second in command, Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, a surly, crabbed, crusty old man whom the disrespectful juniors called "Vinegar". The Government recalled Parker and put him in command against the Dutch whom he fought in a gory battle off the Dogger Bank. To take his place in America they sent out Admiral Hood.

Unfortunately for the greatness of Britain, Rodney was now invalided home. In his absence the French admiral conveyed his ships to the coast of Virginia and, outmanœuvring his opponents in the battle of the Chesapeake, brought about the surrender of the British army at Yorktown. This disaster determined one issue of the war. It established the independence of the United States. De Grasse hurried back to the Indies, intent on finishing that business also. Admiral Hood had but a small exhausted fleet. But he found De Grasse in Frigate Bay, St. Kitts, and by manœuvres of unexampled adroitness held him in check and impudently played with him.

For all that the outlook was dismal and gloomy; and as the year 1781 came to a close it did seem as if Britain must bow her head before her enemies. In the early days of 1782 the island of Minorca was lost, and the disgrace of this at last brought about the resignation of the hated minister, Lord North. Keppel was at once appointed First Lord of the Admiralty: and all the men who had been boycotted for his sake or with him been driven into retirement, trooped back and laid their swords before the throne.

Jervis was the first to distinguish himself. He captured a French battleship single-handed. In February Rodney joined Hood at Barbados. On the "glorious Twelfth of April" the two of them hurled destruction on the French at the Battle of the Saints. This great victory saved the West Indies. In September Lord Howe with the Channel fleet left England in the *Victory*. In vain the French and Spanish massed their forces round Gibraltar. In vain they assailed its batteries in *Indestructible* boats. Lord Howe assisted by Barrington and Jervis scattered their forces to the four winds and brought relief to the Rock.

Such in outline was the American War in which Nelson saw his earliest service. But circumstances conspired to keep him away from its main drift, very greatly to his own disappointment. The young men who made their fortunes in the war were Cornwallis and Saumarez. Cornwallis in Byron's battle off Grenada carried his ship the *Lion* into the hottest of the press and defied the whole French fleet to capture her. He distinguished himself anew under Hood at Frigate Bay and established his reputation at the Battle of the Saints. No man in the navy was more popular. He had a round red face and a jolly laugh. He was known by one of a hundred nicknames, "Coachee," "Mr. Whip," "Billy Blue," "Blue Billy," and "Billy-go-tight". He was made an admiral some years before Nelson. But then by some years he was Nelson's senior. Saumarez was exactly Nelson's age. Like Nelson in 1781 he was commanding a little frigate. But then by a turn of fortune's wheel he obtained command of a battleship and a share in the "Twelfth of April". On that memorable day no one smote the French with greater force. "*Saumarez* is his name," they said, "and *summary* his method".

After the American War there were ten years of peace. None too long an interval in which to reorganize the fleet. Yet the work was done. Lord Howe saw to that. And when the French Revolution broke out and the powers of Europe joined in a league to check the spread of republican ideas, Lord Howe took command of the Channel. In 1794 he brought the French fleet to battle on the *Glorious First of June* and inflicted on the forces of Jacobin France their first decisive defeat.

This battle introduced to the favourable notice of the world one who must always figure largely in any account of Nelson's life.

Cuthbert Collingwood was born in The Side Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1750. He came of a good family more blessed with ancestry than wealth. He was educated at the local Grammar School, and, if he had been allowed by circumstances to follow his own bent, he would probably have adopted literature as a profession. "He had such an art of expressing himself with his pen as brings many of his letters in polish, sweetness of language and archness of humour, very close to some of the happiest compositions of Addison." But he was not consulted as to his inclinations. An uncle of his was a frigate-captain, and at thirteen he was sent to

a. He did not want to go. His first days aboard were days of object misery, until a good-natured lieutenant took pity on his loneliness and was rewarded by the youngster with a slice of cake. But if Collingwood was not born to the sea, his sterling character and deep-rooted sense of honour led him to accept conditions with uncomplaining patience and unswerving steadiness of aim. His unbending rectitude made his discipline proverbial, but though he was "about as yielding as an anchor-stock and regarded a powder of shot as much as a shower of snowflakes," he was beneath his iron exterior as tender-hearted as a schoolgirl. No one ever was less like the typical sea-captain of the story-books. The sea-crews dreaded him: yet he was gentle, meek, long-suffering, and of great kindness. His bravery was transcendent; and yet of as gentle a character as the ship whose deck he trod. "Another true sight of those days," wrote the author of *Henry Esmond*, "was Captain Collingwood, and I think since Heaven made Gentlemen, there is not record of a better one than that."

Though he lived and died at sea Collingwood never lost his homely qualities, and cared more for the sight of an English hedgerow than for all the blues and greens of ocean. Even when in command of the Mediterranean he longed for the time when he could return to his home and the garden that he loved. "Then will I plant my cabbages and prune my gooseberry trees, cultivate yew and twist the woodbine through the hawthorn hedge with as much satisfaction in my improvement as ever Diocletian had, and with the same desire and hope that the occasion never may occur again to call me back to more important but less pleasurable duties."

The same ill-fortune that kept Nelson out of all the big battles of the American War seemed to dog his footsteps in the days of Napoleon. His ship was told off to the Mediterranean just as the chief centre of activity seemed inclined to fix itself in the waters of Northern Europe. The *First of June* was balanced by French victories ashore. And, when Belgium had been conquered and Holland coerced into an offensive and defensive alliance, France had a seaboard stretching from the Texel to Bayonne. An army for the invasion of Britain might be expected from any of a dozen sally-ports. And all eyes turned to the North Sea fleet and the blockade of Admiral Duncan.



But Nelson's turn came at last. Duncan put an end to invasion schemes when he overwhelmed his enemies at Camperdown. And the French offensive was turned into new channels by the coming of Napoleon. Napoleon earned the gratitude of the Directory by delivering them from the Paris mob. The Directory gave him command of an army and sent him to fight the Austrians in Italy. Instantly the zone of battles swung to the Mediterranean, and Nelson found himself to his joy in the very thick of things.

## OF SAILING TACTICS AND NAVAL MANŒUVRES.

In battles fought at sea there were certain rules and customs universally observed. In the first place the fleets were disposed in *Line Ahead*: that is, the vessels were arranged in Indian file, one behind the other. The reason for this is evident. No other formation would enable every ship to make the greatest possible use of all her guns. A fleet, it is true, was often drawn up in *Line Abreast* as an army is drawn up for battle on shore. The disposition was natural, serviceable, and frequently employed. But it was employed as a sailing evolution only. It was never used as a battle formation. For in line abreast no ship could fire a single shot without risk of injuring a companion. By way of corollary we may note in passing that, since ships of the line carrying their guns on a broadside proceeded in line ahead, the direction of their gun-fire was at right angles to the line of their advance.\*

There was another traditional usage almost as invariable as the line ahead. An admiral strove with all his might to keep his fleet parallel to that of his opponent. For conceive a different disposition. Suppose that the commander of the *Reds* carried his fleet into battle in such a way that his line formed an angle with that of the *Blues*. Then every ship in the *Blue* fleet could mass her fire upon the leading ship of the *Reds*, blot it out of existence, and treat with similar comfortable ease every other *Red* ship in succession.

\*For centuries naval architects strove to evolve a ship which (without destroying the possibility of broadside fire) should enable a commander to fire all his guns in the direction in which he was moving. This astounding feat was practically accomplished when the present *Dreadnought* was launched.

One or two naval battles were fought at anchor. But the vast majority were fought in motion. It might perhaps be thought, especially with sailing-ships, that collisions would result. There was of course a possibility of this. Troubridge almost collided with a Spaniard at the battle of St. Vincent. The *Redoubtable* ran aboard the *Victory* at the battle of Trafalgar. But under ordinary circumstances the risk was not great. For the fleets were drawn up close-hauled \* to the wind at reasonable distances apart. The consequent movement was insufficient to interfere with the anvil strokes of war and sufficient to make manœuvres possible and facilitate co-operation between ship and ship.

If two fleets were drawn up parallel to one another and both of them were sailing in close-hauled line ahead, one of the two of necessity would be nearer the wind than the other. The fleet in the wind was said to have the weather gage.† And from its position it derived certain advantages. By keeping its station it could delay as long as it chose the commencement of the battle. And of course it could decide at what precise moment the combat should begin. For these reasons the English sailors preferred the *Windward Position*. They felt that it gave them the whip hand : that, with the wind on their side as it were, the battle was half won. Besides, the wind behind them drove the smoke of battle into the eyes of their antagonists.

But the position had its disadvantages as well. The windward ships might be able at any moment to open the attack. But to do so they had to *bear up*.‡ They had to change their formation to line abreast, and shift within range of the enemy's guns. Now in line abreast they were "end on" to the foe. They were almost incapable of harm themselves, and had each one to endure the broadsides of an enemy. Of course as soon as they were near enough for real damage to be done they *hauled their wind*; that is, they turned again to line ahead and brought their own guns into action. But for all that the advance of a windward fleet gave a very fine opening to their opponents. And it was for this reason that the French preferred the *Leeward Position*. They were adepts at injuring topmast spars as their enemy "came down" to the attack. It is difficult to see how they hoped by this procedure

\* See above, pp. xv and xvi. † See above, p. xv. ‡ See above, p. xvi.

ever to win decisive victories at sea. But in many a campaign they would have been perfectly content if they could have prevented the British from coming to close grips. And their method had this to recommend it. Every hostile topmast accounted for meant a diminution in the speed of their opponents, so that they themselves gained an access of manœuvring power and could either retire from the contest or continue it with better chance of success.

Now let us imagine two fleets in line ahead parallel to one another, and let us imagine that the windward ships have worked their way into battle without suffering unduly aloft. Beyond mere power of endurance, what possible means have the combatants of determining the result? It must be admitted that often enough mere power of endurance and nothing else was indeed the determining factor. It was the determining factor especially in the conflicts between Britons and Dutch. And this is why it became a rule in the English Navy that an admiral before opening his attack should turn his fleet upon the same tack as that adopted by his adversary. A battle begun off Whitby with the wind at west could theoretically be carried on until Dover was reached if both fleets were on the starboard tack. If, however, they engaged on opposite tacks they would merely glance past each other. An hour or two at most would finish the affray.

The French with their distaste for close engagements accepted this "glancing" as a battle-plan. They practised with rigorous discipline the sufficiently difficult evolution of turning a fleet with precision and speed from one tack to the other. Occasionally they employed the ruse with satisfactory results. At the Battle of Ushant Admiral Keppel was compelled by the exemplary skill of his opponent to accept a two hours' battle or none. The interval of course was quite insufficient for the drubbing he meant to administer.

De Grasse tried to employ the same "glancing" manœuvre at the thrice famous Battle of the Saints. But he had met his match. There was no tactical device of which Rodney was not cognisant. Taking advantage of a slight shifting of the wind during the engagement, he suddenly sliced through the enemy's line. His own ship led the way. The rest of the division followed. The French fleet was divided into helpless fragments. And on one of them the great English tactician massed the whole of his strength.

This brilliant stratagem combined together the two great

tactical principles. It took the enemy completely by surprise. It overwhelmed a part of his array with an irresistible preponderance of force.

It was necessary that there should be a reasonable interval between two ships in the line for the safety of all concerned. Yet the interval was a source of weakness like the joints in a suit of armour. And the wider the interval, the greater the peril. Hence the law which commanded a ship on no account whatever to leave her place in the line. For the departure of a single vessel more than doubled at once the usual gap, and laid the fleet open to just such a disaster as the Frenchmen suffered at the Battle of the Saints.

In another of his battles, the Battle of Martinique, Rodney resorted to another stratagem. Knowing that the interval between any two of his opponent's ships measured 400 yards, he closed the intervals between his own ships to a quarter the distance, intending to take the enemy off their guard and employ the whole of his own fleet against at most a half of theirs. He might have executed his main design if he had been contented to attack the enemy's van. But then, as he was never tired of showing, a fleet in motion should be assaulted in the rear. Assault it in the van! The centre and rear move up in support. Assault it in the rear! The centre and van are incapable of help until they have turned themselves about. And this, at any rate with sailing-ships, was a business requiring considerable time.

Rodney's attack at Martinique was not as successful as it should have been. That, however, was not his fault. If his captains had been quicker, he would have confused the French by the novelty of his scheme.

It was a good scheme beyond doubt. And yet it was not quite perfect because the neglected portion of the enemy were free to put about and return to the battle. If they had done so they might have made things uncommonly unpleasant for Rodney by putting him between two fires. Rodney intended to attack the French commander-in-chief so that he could not by signal tell the rest what to do. He intended to batter so unmercifully the part he first attacked that they would be beyond the need of assistance before assistance could be brought. But suppose the Frenchmen made their signals and fought unflinchingly as well. Then

there was just the possibility that Rodney would fall into the pit which he had digged for others.

To put your enemy between two fires was in fact a favourite naval stratagem. It was called by the sailors *Doubling*. It was often attempted during the Dutch wars. It was used with telling effect by the French at Beachy Head. It was regarded as a danger so deadly and yet so common that during the eighteenth century it became the rule in the British Navy that the fleet before engaging should draw itself out into a fighting-line precisely equal in length and exactly coextensive with the enemy's. Rodney knew that this was the English rule. He abandoned the rule to catch the French. But the same trap would not catch them twice.

One of the neatest stratagems ever used at sea was that devised by Lord Howe and employed by him on the *Glorious First of June*. He adopted the usual windward position which the French expected him to adopt. He bore up to open the attack, running down not "end on" to the foe, but slantwise, so that his ships could use their broadsides as they approached. Then instead of hauling her wind each vessel had instructions to squeeze her way through the enemy and continue the battle from to leeward. The French line was to be broken at every point and its road of retreat cut off.

But even in this battle only six prizes were taken.

The truth is, that with two parallel lines drawn up on a flat and featureless surface, it was uncommonly difficult either to mass forces in one place or plan the simplest mode of surprise without being detected by the enemy. To take six ships from an opponent who had twenty-six was regarded, and very rightly regarded, as a "Glorious" success.

At the Battle of Trafalgar the enemy had thirty-three ships. Admiral Villeneuve was the finest tactician outside the British Navy. He was also the coolest fighter and the bravest sailor. Nelson was in marked inferiority. He had only twenty-seven sail. Yet in fair fight he robbed his antagonist of two-thirds of his fleet—twenty ships out of thirty-three.

He leads; we hear our Seaman call  
In the roll of battles won;  
For he is Britain's Admiral  
Till setting of the sun.

—MEREDITH.

## THE LIFE OF NELSON

*In the opinion of the world the one unrivalled thunderbolt that England has forged.*—LORD ROSEBERRY.

### BOYHOOD AND YOUTH, 1758-75

THOSE who make a pilgrimage to Nelson shrines row out to the *Victory* in Portsmouth harbour or visit the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral. Burnham Thorpe, within easy reach of crowded watering-places, Cromer and Sheringham and Hunstanton, is left unvisited. The centuries have made but little change. It remains to-day the perfect picture of an old-time country village; with old grey church and village green, one straggling street, and swelling meadowlands with fringe of trees and dumpy straw-built cattle-sheds. Due north some three miles from the churchyard wall is the sandy coast washed by the rolling North Sea waves.

Nelson was born at Burnham Thorpe on 29th September, 1758. His father was vicar of the parish. His mother was a sister of that Captain Suckling who commanded the *Dreadnought* so pluckily in the fight off Cap François and made the "Twenty-first of October" a red-letter day in the family annals a year before Nelson was born. From his father Nelson derived his stern code of honour and exalted sense of duty; from his mother he inherited a weak frame and a burden of ill-health which he was seldom able completely to shake off. Nelson's father lived to congratulate his "dear Rear-Admiral" on the victory of the Nile: but his mother, to Nelson's lasting grief, died when he was but nine years old.

Nelson came sixth in a family of eleven. He had four brothers

and one sister older than himself. His kinsman, Lord Walpole of Wollerton, consented to stand sponsor and gave his godson the Walpole name, Horatio. This was never popular with the young people. They preferred Horace, but the vicar always insisted on the baptismal name, at least for signatures. When nursery days were over Nelson first attended the Grammar School at Norwich and afterwards went to North Walsham. Here the visitor may still inspect the initials he carved on the wall: while in a school-room hung with Nelson prints there is still pointed out the exact position which he occupied; midway between the fireplace and the door, on the right as one enters the room.

It was while Nelson was at North Walsham that he received his call to the sea. Captain Suckling had offered to provide for one of his many nephews and Horatio at his own express desire was chosen. At twelve years of age he was small and undersized; he was fragile and sickly. He would have had no chance of passing the Navy medical examination of the present day. But his spirit was not as the spirit of other boys. He was old for his years with a quite grown-up idea of the work that a man must do in the world. He was eager to begin as soon as possible. The rest of the family were sensible of his physical unfitness for the sea service with all its hardships and discomforts. Captain Suckling was amazed. But as in after days, so now; Horatio Nelson bore down all opposition. By sheer importunity he got his way. And one cold dark morning towards the end of 1770 a messenger arrived at North Walsham to carry him home at once. There were insistent rumours of war and Captain Suckling was commissioning a ship.

The vicar accompanied his son upon the first stage of his journey. The two travelled together to London. But, after seeing Horatio into the Chatham coach, the father returned to Burnham and Nelson went on alone. It was a most disconsolate little figure that at last reached Chatham. There was no one to meet him, and Nelson wandered about the streets trying to find H.M.S. *Raisonné*. He did not know where he ought to go and was too independent to ask. At last he was found by a friendly officer who had compassion on him, gave him a meal and sent him on his way worlds happier. But things were no better when he reached the ship. He was not expected. His uncle was ashore. Not a soul took any note of him. He crouched beside a gun

watching with wide eyes the meaningless motions of the company as they worked to get the ship ready for sea. It was not until his second day on board that they paid him any attention.

The war, for which the *Raisonnable* was commissioned, never took place after all. But Nelson was embarked on his profession : and his uncle with conscientious zeal set to work to educate him. For seamanship he sent him in a merchantman for a cruise to the West Indies, and when he returned put him on to navigation. This was dull work for the most part, but by way of reward for his industry Nelson was permitted to command the cutter and decked long-boat when these were sent to the North Foreland or the Tower. By degrees he became a trustworthy pilot for the mouth of the Thames, and gained a confidence in himself amongst rocks and shoals which in after years was of the greatest comfort to him.

Two years after his entrance into the Navy, when he was fourteen and a half years of age, a polar expedition was projected by the Government. Two strong little bomb-vessels were chosen as suitable for the purpose and put under the charge of Captain Phipps, R.N. Nelson was intent on going and never gave his uncle a moment's peace until he had promised to use all his influence to secure a berth for him. This was eventually found on board the *Carcass* (Captain Lutwidge). No "boys" were included in the expedition and Nelson was only accepted on the understanding that he should do a man's work. He signed on as Captain's coxswain. The two vessels made many useful observations, worked their way within ten degrees of the Pole and were finally caught in the clutches of the ice to the North of Spitzbergen. The hulls were frozen immovably, the ice-pack was thrust as high as the mainyard, and after vain endeavours to cut a channel to the open sea it was finally agreed to abandon the ships. Preparations for flight were made, but while the boats, heavily laden with provisions, were being dragged laboriously over the floes, the ships with all sails set began at last to move and at length reached home in safety.

It was while the *Carcass* was wedged in the ice that Nelson had his adventure with the bear. As a rule the nights were clear, but on one occasion the fog came up and hung a curtain round the ship. Under cover of this Nelson, attended by a midshipman,



went forth without permission in pursuit of game. In time they came upon a polar bear. Nelson raised his musket: but the weapon flashed in the pan and left the hunter defenceless. Nelson's companion counselled immediate retreat, but Nelson grasped his gun by the barrel. "Do but let me get a blow at the devil with the butt-end of my musket," he said, "and we shall have him." At this moment the fog lifted and revealed an exciting picture to those on board—the huge beast faced by the scrap of a boy with clumsy musket poised like a felling-axe. Captain Lutwidge ordered a gun to be discharged, and the animal, alarmed by the noise, made off; but had it not been for a rift in the ice which prevented the bear from closing, England might have sighed in vain for one to deliver her from Napoleon. When the hunters returned to the ship Captain Lutwidge sent for them. He looked for the usual faltering accents of errant midshipmen, but in answer to a demand for explanations Nelson replied with a dignity worthy of Dr. Johnson, "Sir, I desired to kill the bear that I might carry his skin to my father".

Through the kind offices of his uncle Nelson soon after his return was included in another peace expedition, and sailed in the *Seahorse* to India. He was entered on the books as able seaman but was soon transferred to the quarter-deck as midshipman. He visited the whole coast of the Peninsula, and found a lifelong friend in Thomas Troubridge. But under the Indian sun his constitution broke down. He shrank to a skeleton, began to lose the use of his limbs and was invalided home. He was angry with himself for being sick, and as he thought of his professional prospects was filled with depression and anxiety. But the voyage restored him and he arrived to find the American War in its second year and his uncle Controller of the Navy. Though still in his teens he sat for his Lieutenant's examination and passed with flying colours.

## EARLY SERVICES

### CHAPTER I. DURING THE AMERICAN WAR, 1775-1783

He was at once appointed to the *Lowestoft*, a fine frigate of thirty-two guns \* commanded by Captain Locker, a favourite disciple of

\* A thirty-two gun frigate was considered the best school for an active young officer.



NELSON AND THE BEAR

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In the background is H.M.S. Carcass. She has topsails set, with fore and main top-gallants. Her lower sails or Courses are furled. She is firing one of her starboard guns in order to frighten the bear.



Lord Hawke. The *Lowestoft* proceeded to the West Indies, the main theatre of the war; and kept wide open a watchful eye for the mischievous privateer. There were several smart little vessels about with letters of marque from the Philadelphia Congress, and on one occasion Locker snapped up a prize. The wind was very wild at the time and there was a very heavy sea. The first lieutenant set off with a prize-crew but was soon flung back. He could make nothing of it. Meanwhile the boat swung alongside and the angry water threatened every minute to dash it to pieces against the frigate's timbers. Out of patience Captain Locker called out, "Have I no officer in the ship who can board the prize?" whereupon the master immediately ran up to the gangway, and would have entered the boat, but Nelson was before him. "It is my turn now," he said, "and if I return, it will be yours." Needless to say he did not come back. The prize was so completely water-logged that Nelson's boat went in and out again with the sea; but he boarded her at last, and more than that he carried her into port.

Locker brought him before the notice of Sir Peter Parker, Commander-in-Chief of the Jamaica Station, a man famed in two hemispheres for unflinching valour. Parker promoted Nelson to be lieutenant in his flagship, the *Bristol*. He became warmly attached—as indeed did every one—to the young officer; and Nelson rapidly rose from third lieutenant to first. At the conclusion of 1778 he was appointed Commander of a brig, a two-masted square-rigged vessel called the *Badger*. In those times the gun-brig filled a position which to-day is taken by the destroyer. She was the greyhound of the fleet. Cruising off the north-west corner of Jamaica Nelson discovered another brig that by accident had been set on fire. Approaching without hesitation he assumed the direction of affairs. He ordered the powder to be brought from below and thrown overboard. He pointed the guns upward to shield his rescue parties. Then he brought his boats alongside and by his promptitude and coolness conveyed every one into safety. On 11th June, 1779, though it wanted yet three months to his twenty-first birthday, Nelson was by Sir Peter Parker made post into the *Hinchinbrook*, a small frigate of twenty-four guns.

About this time the Spaniards began to take a part in the war and the Governor of Jamaica conceived a project which should

"distress the enemy in their very vitals". The scheme was directed like those of Drake and Vernon against a part of Central America. An expedition was to advance up the San Juan River and capture the fort that commanded the entrance to Lake Nicaragua.\* The moment he heard of the plan Nelson in his impetuous way volunteered; and to his joy the *Hinchinbrook* was selected. His part in the expedition was properly quite small. He had to conduct the army to the Mosquito coast and see that they were not molested on the way. But Nelson was never content merely with doing the bare minimum of duty. When the River San Juan was reached in the spring of 1780 he decided to push on with the soldiers. He was ready for anything; difficulties seemed to vanish at his approach; and when at last progress was barred by a fortified island in mid-stream he and his blue-jackets "carried it by boarding". In seventeen days the fort was reached and if Nelson's advice had been taken it would probably have yielded at once to a bold direct assault. But the military invested the place in form and, as the days slipped by, the horrors of the country declared themselves. The blazing sun blinded the invaders. The torrential rains soaked them to the skin. The waters were brackish, the plants poisonous. Beautiful fruits tempted men to their death and venomous reptiles slew them as they slept. The unwholesome miasma of the tropical forest invaded the brain like a nightmare and, though the indomitable pluck of the Briton prevailed at length, Fort San Juan had in the end to be abandoned, for there were not enough men left to hold it. Of 1800 who ascended the river 300 cadaverous-looking creatures crawled back; of 200 seaman from the *Hinchinbrook* 190 were buried. Happily for England Sir Peter Parker watched over Nelson, and the very day before the fort surrendered got through to him a message of recall. Already the climate had played havoc with Nelson's health and when he reached Jamaica he could no longer hold up his head. He had no reserve of bodily strength to draw upon and for long he hovered on the verge. But Lady Parker tended him with a mother's care and saved him by superlative nursing. When he was sufficiently strong to be moved Sir Peter sent him

\* The route thus marked out follows one of the great natural roadways between Atlantic and Pacific and was at one time suggested as the most feasible course for an Isthmian canal.

home to England. There was at Jamaica a battleship very badly in need of a complete overhaul—the *Lion*, fresh from her exploit in the battle that Byron fought. Her captain, the jolly-faced “Billy-go-tight,” took charge of the wasted hero and nothing could have been more tender than his solicitude during the voyage. Nelson always said that he owed his life to Cornwallis, and between the two there sprang up a warm affectionate friendship.

When Nelson reached home in the autumn of 1780 he was little more than a wreck. For months he lay in a precarious condition. His left side was to all intents paralysed; his left arm hung helplessly from the shoulder like a useless weight. In this condition he was conveyed to Bath. He was quite incapable of moving by himself, but they physicked him three times a day and three times a day he drank the waters and was dipped in a chalybeate bath. It is doubtful whether the treatment accelerated his recovery: it certainly involved excruciating pain. Yet even on a sick-bed the attraction of his manner charmed the hearts of those who attended him, and the doctor who set him on the high road to recovery resolutely refused to receive the usual fees. At the beginning of 1781 he was still exceedingly ill, but his spirit had returned and though physically incapable of hurting a fly he applied at once for further employment.

In August he was appointed to another small frigate of twenty-eight guns, the *Albemarle*. She was very far from being a model craft. She was crank; she was slack in stays; and her masts were too long. But Nelson would always make allowances for a ship, if the men were the right sort. And with him the men always were the right sort. It was his nature to seek the best there was in every one, and in seeking for good qualities he as often as not created them. No man dared to be a coward when the captain believed him a hero; no one had the heart to be a villain when the captain believed him a saint, especially when the captain aforesaid went out of his way to see that everybody on board was happy and contented. One is reminded of Joan of Arc entering Orleans with her spotless banner upraised, greeting the thirsty swashbucklers as if they were paladins and mothering them into men.\*

Nelson was kept waiting for weeks before he received his

\* In the seven volumes of Nelson's letters there is no word of complaint against any of his officers or any of his men.

sailing orders, and at length was given instructions to convoy the trade to the Baltic; an unpleasant task for anyone in midwinter and for Nelson wearing every appearance of a deliberate attempt to see how much his frail little body could bear. The journey, however, was not a wasted one, for Nelson gained a close acquaintance with the approach to Copenhagen, that proved invaluable in after days.

On returning to England Nelson dropped anchor in the Downs and went ashore to report himself. During his absence a storm arose. Almost all the vessels began to drag their cables and a merchantman drifted athwart the bows of the *Albemarle*. At this point Nelson reappeared and at once decided to join his ship. The fishermen of Deal declared that they could not launch a boat, and that even if they launched a boat she could not live in such a sea. Nelson pulled out all the gold he had with him and for fifteen guineas found men willing to risk their all. Time and again the spectators on shore vowed that the boat was gone, but she swam like a cork over gulping waves and reached the ship at last. Bowsprit and foremast were cut away, and the *Albemarle* was saved.

While Nelson by sickness and petty commissions was detained on this side of the Atlantic events had moved swiftly on the other. The fatal battle of the Chesapeake had been fought and the dominion of North America had passed from the keeping of Britain. Now through the snoring winter breeze which Nelson defied in a fishing smack, the greatest sailor of the day set forth to win the Battle of The Saints. How much would not Nelson have given to accompany him! Instead he was bidden to carry the trade to Quebec and Newfoundland. To his friends it seemed highly improbable that he would ever survive the icy cold of Canada; but he refused to allow them to interfere on his behalf, declaring like Benbow of old that it was none of his business to take account of climates hot and cold, but without regard to conditions to serve his country and King. His cheerfulness met an appropriate reward, for the climate of Canada suited him admirably.

When his work in the St. Lawrence was complete Nelson sailed to New York and here he was fortunate in meeting one of the Navy's greatest sons. Lord Hood was then in the very hey-day of his fame. The reputation he had won by his matchless

manceuvres in Frigate Bay had been enhanced by his brilliant share in the Battle of The Saints : and Rodney's recall left him the ablest sailor in American waters. Nelson, ever ready to offer incense to talent, became an ardent worshipper. Lord Hood he afterwards declared "the greatest sea officer I ever knew . . . equally great in all situations which an admiral can be placed in". Nothing would suit him, when the hurricane season was over, but to accompany Lord Hood to the West Indies. It was pointed out to him that the North American station was before all others the station for prize-money. Nelson brushed the suggestion indignantly aside. "The West Indies is the station for Honour," he exclaimed. Lord Hood would hardly have been human if he had been proof against such flattery. He carried Nelson away with him and daily admitted him into closer communion and fellowship. It may safely be affirmed that he was the earliest to discern the immense possibilities in the enthusiastic young captain who paid him such devoted homage, and it is equally certain that from his teaching Nelson derived no small part of his inspiration. It was Hood who inculcated that fiery principle which Nelson afterwards so triumphantly asserted, that the task of a British Admiral is but poorly done so long as a unit of the enemies' fleet escapes alive to tell the story.

There was at this time on board the flagship *Barfleur* another very distinguished personality. This was the Duke of Clarence, afterwards King William IV. Hood was responsible for the Prince's nautical education, and was careful to have him instructed in every branch of his profession, gunnery, seamanship and navigation. For tactics the Duke was sent not to any experienced man in a fleet of veterans, but to the young captain who was but now in his second frigate. As a sidelight on Nelson's abilities and Hood's opinion of them, this single fact is most illuminating.

As far as active service was concerned Nelson might have stayed in North America, for in 1783 the war was ended by the treaty of Versailles. In the summer Nelson was home again and prepared to sever his connexion with the *Albemarle*. But the *Albemarle* did not want to part with him. There were on board men who for eleven years had served at sea continuously without a chance of setting foot on shore. Yet every man in the ship without a single exception volunteered to enter for any vessel to which their captain



might be appointed. Nelson did what he could to secure them their arrears of pay, but he did not at once apply for a new ship. Instead he passed over to France and for two months he slaved for hours every day in an effort to learn the language of his enemies.

When Nelson returned from France, Lord Hood graciously showed him signal marks of favour. He presented him at the King's levee and procured him the command of the frigate *Boreas*. In the year succeeding the peace \* Nelson sailed for the Leeward Isles having on board a number of midshipmen. Among them there was at least one who fought shy of climbing to the mast-head. In most ships there would have been short shrift for timidity. But where the feelings of others were concerned Nelson always displayed the utmost tenderness. Instead of scolding he issued the young officer an invitation to meet him up aloft. Then while the nervous midshipman crawled up the windward shrouds he himself raced up the lee, and, welcoming his guest at the top, spoke to him cheerily and invited his pity for those foolish souls who could fancy there was danger in the ascent, or even anything disagreeable.

A peace appointment on the Leeward station offered a prospect sufficiently dull, but excitement followed fast in Nelson's wake. The war just concluded had changed the American colonists into foreigners. As such they were, by the law of the time, cut off from all share in British trade, and in theory at least debarred from intercourse with the West India Islands: This result was lamented not only at Boston and Savannah but at Nevis and St. Kitts and, as a natural consequence, the commerce that could not be conducted openly was conducted in underhand ways. Everybody connived at the breach of the law—governors, naval men and administrators. There was money to be made and the only sufferer was the dignity of a snuffy old statute book. But Nelson would not look at things in this light. Either the law was wrong or it was right. If it was wrong, why had it not been abrogated? If right, it must then be enforced; and himself he resolved to enforce it. He met with strenuous opposition from all sides. The Governor of St. Kitts, a choleric old man, lost his temper. "Old generals," he blazed, "are not in the habit of taking advice from young gentlemen!" "I have the honour, sir," Nelson quietly replied, "of being as old

\* May, 1784.

as the Prime Minister of England, and think myself as capable of commanding one of his Majesty's ships as that Minister is of governing the State."

More serious was the retaliation of the traders. They saw that the feeling of the colonies was with them and they determined to bring a case before the courts. They cast their damages at £40,000: but the first Lieutenant of the *Boreas* was too clever for them and they endeavoured in vain to serve a writ. None the less, things were unpleasant for Nelson: He was kept in voluntary durance in his ship, knowing that, if ever he set foot on shore, he would in that same moment be impounded. A sympathetic officer ventured to express his pity. "Pity!" said Nelson in a scornful voice, "I shall live, sir, to be envied!"

"The Captain of the *Boreas*" became the most talked-of man in the islands, and his sterling rectitude won him a host of admirers among those who did not consider honesty old-fashioned. It was at this time that Nelson formed the most enduring friendship of his life. He had met Cuthbert Collingwood before. He had shared with him the favours of Sir Peter Parker. But it is in adversity that a man learns in whom to trust and Collingwood stood by him now with faithful fearlessness. In the end the matter was referred home, and right was vindicated. But as if to put the crown on Nelson's hardships the thanks of the King were transmitted not to the ambitious young captain who had risked all to satisfy his conscience, but to the superior who from first to last had deliberately sanctioned what was wrong.

While Nelson was in the neighbourhood of St. Kitts word came to him that a French mission was about to make a survey of the British islands. Resolved to stop such a proceeding, Nelson sought the intruders and expressed to them the pleasure he derived from the friendly feeling that had brought them into British waters. The Frenchmen of course were equally polite, and thanked him much for his hospitality. Then without appearing to be rude they tried their hardest to shake him off. But Nelson would not be shaken off. Nothing he said would give him greater joy than to show them everything, and escort them whithersoever they went. Nay; it was no trouble at all. It was the very least that he could do! At length the Frenchmen made a bolt for it and tried to lose their host. But Nelson was ready for all their tricks and after

a while the survey mission abandoned their attempt and retired to Martinique.

For the latter half of his commission Nelson was left senior officer upon the Leewards Station, and enjoyed for a while the dignity of an independent command. During this period Prince William came out as commander of the frigate *Pegasus* and put himself under Nelson's orders. The two became fast friends and when in the spring of 1787 Nelson was married to a young widow Mrs. Nisbet, niece of the President of Nevis, Prince William very graciously insisted on giving the bride away. A few months after the wedding Nelson returned to England, his term of office over. Throughout his three years as captain of the *Boreas* he had looked after every man on board with a care and an interest for which it would be difficult to find a parallel even in the lives of Anson, Howe and Duncan. He had made life pleasant for them. He had done what he could to make the rations palatable. He had varied their employment and provided amusements and harmless relaxation. As a result not a single life was lost from the beginning of the cruise to the end; and the feeling of the company for their commander was something very different from ordinary respect. They worshipped the very planks on which he trod.

## CHAPTER II. THE AGAMEMNON. 1793-1796

Five years elapsed before Nelson again saw service afloat. He took up his quarters during this period at the parsonage, Burnham Thorpe. He lived a simple country life; digging in the garden, rambling with the dogs, or inspecting the dairy and farmyard. He bought a pony and carried a fowling-piece. Once he shot a partridge: but all agreed that this was an accident. And then a great part of each day he set apart for study. He read widely. He studied charts and made plans. However swift and unlooked-for may have been his lightning strokes in war, the brilliant inspiration of a moment was begotten of close devotion to study.

But Nelson could not really be happy long at home. The sea called him; and when there came rumours of war he besought Whitehall for a commission. "If your lordships," he wrote pathetically on one occasion, "should be pleased to appoint me to a cockle-boat, I shall feel grateful." He was at this time still

unknown to the world at large, but the Admiralty were by no means unconscious of his worth, and the moment the war of the French Revolution broke out they made him an offer. If he willed it, he might have a sixty-four at once: but in any case he should not long be kept waiting for a seventy-four. Nelson clutched feverishly at the smaller ship, and in January, 1793, was appointed to the *Agamemnon*, his first and best-loved battleship.

If he had waited for his seventy-four he might have sailed with Lord Howe and fought alongside of Collingwood on the Glorious First of June. But the *Agamemnon* was attached to the Mediterranean Fleet and as Lord Hood was nominated to the chief command no other billet could have given him an equal satisfaction.

The Western Mediterranean in the summer of 1793 offered a cordial welcome to the British fleet. The Pope was vehemently opposed to Jacobinism; and so were almost all the Italian States. Spain was a fellow-member with England in the alliance against France, and to swell Lord Hood's armada sent a fleet of twenty-four ships. The ill-fated house of Bourbon still claimed a following on the Mediterranean coast, and at Toulon numbered many supporters in the dockyard, arsenal and fleet. The British Government cherished a hope that the pressure exerted by Lord Hood would force this invaluable base to declare for the *ancien régime*.

Hood exerted pressure and blockaded the harbour strictly. The hungry citizens clamoured for food and negotiations were opened. Lord Hood would listen to no sort of argument. So towards the end of August, without a shot being fired, Toulon was occupied by the British in the name of Louis XVII. The harbour contained fifty-eight warships; more than thirty of them sail of the line. This haul by itself should have ended the war if Lord Hood had only been allowed to remove what he had taken. But the moment he made the suggestion there was an indignant outcry, not only from the Royalists whose wishes could not with fairness be neglected, but also from the Spaniards whose jealous suspicions were aroused.

It was after the capitulation that Lord Hood found a particular service for his hero-worshipper. He knew that he could hardly hope that his occupation of Toulon would long remain unchallenged, and to secure his ground he needed a far stronger force than the insignificant landing-party he had brought from England.

This numbered no more than fifteen hundred men and the fortifications to be guarded extended over fifteen miles. Therefore he summoned Captain Nelson and bade him with all speed fly to Naples and urge the Neapolitan Court to provide 10,000 reinforcements.

At Naples the one person who felt acutely the critical nature of foreign affairs was the Queen. The King, a bourgeois creature at heart, was contented to hunt and shoot or bandy jests with the multitude. But Maria Carolina, a sister of Queen Marie Antoinette, saw the fate that had overturned the throne of France ready to overturn the throne of Naples. Pity for her sister occupied her waking thoughts, and at nights nameless Jacobin horrors crowded her dreams. In her distress she turned for consolation to the wife of the British Ambassador, Lady Hamilton; not only, as Romney's pictures show, the most beautiful Englishwoman of her day, but also the most passionately patriotic. Gifted with a kind heart and ready sympathy she did her best to cheer the drooping Queen; and drew for her in glowing colours a picture of the British fleet, sailing unchallenged round the world, righting wrongs and rescuing the distressed like England's prototype St. George. If only an Admiral Blake should come with a whip-lash trailing from his masthead how quickly would he drive the *sans-culottes* whining and yelping to their kennels!

To say the very least of it Nelson's sudden visit was not only well-timed, but most dramatic. He came as the fulfilment of the Queen's desire and Lady Hamilton's prophecy. He came as the herald of brighter days and the bearer of immediate good tidings: for Toulon had fallen with its crown of ships and there was hope for Marie Antoinette. If anything more was needed to heighten the impression, Nelson supplied it by his ingratiating tact and fiery enthusiasm. "I am going to introduce you," Sir William said to his wife, "to a little captain who is not exactly handsome, but who will live to become a *great* man. I can tell by his conversation." The Court greeted the British sailor effusively. Banquets were held in his honour, and the King set him at his right hand. And what was more to the point 6,000 troops were immediately granted and transports to carry them to Toulon. Nelson thought that something was due from him in return. He spread a table on board the *Agamemnon*, invited the King and Queen, ordered the

best music, and concealed the ungainly parts of the ship under banks of roses and jasmine. The Court was vastly diverted at the idea of so novel a reception. But just as the appointed hour drew near, tidings were brought of a French sail in the neighbourhood; and without another thought for his dinner-party Nelson weighed anchor and like a lightning flash was off in search of her.

The state visit thus uncereemoniously concluded, Nelson rejoined the flag. Lord Hood congratulated him upon the success of his mission, and gave a gratifying proof of confidence by dispatching him at once upon another. In this way Nelson was happily debarred from all participation in the finale that rang down the curtain on the occupation of Toulon. The Republican armies mustered in strength until there were 45,000 men without the walls. Within, the number of troops was quite inadequate, though raised to 10,000 by the exertions of Lord Hood. Citizen Bonaparte planted his artillery in positions that commanded the city, and on 17th December the Admiral gave reluctant orders for its immediate evacuation. Captain Sidney Smith was entrusted with the task of destroying the ships, and accounted for twenty-four; but the Spaniards told off to co-operate with him set fire to the floating powder-magazine which should have been loaded and sunk. A shattering explosion shook the town and blew one British gunboat to fragments. The burning of the arsenal lent new horrors to the scene, and the Neapolitans, losing their presence of mind, stampeded like so many mules. Amid such distractions Lord Hood quietly rescued the Toulonese. By utilizing nine of the enemies' ships and cramming his own to suffocation he delivered 15,000. Many, however, fell before the muskets of the Jacobins; many were drowned as, in despair, they waded after the boats. Those who were left behind were condemned *en masse*, and in daily batches mechanically executed.

If the circumstances of the withdrawal had left him time to destroy the French fleet utterly Lord Hood would not have regretted the compulsion that set him afloat again. But the new masters of Toulon had still a fleet equal to his own. And the loss of Minorca in the previous war left England without a base of operations nearer than the Bay of Gibraltar. A close blockade of Toulon from the Straits was out of the question, and Lord Hood resolved on the conquest of Corsica.

The French had three strongholds in the island, San Fiorenzo, Bastia and Calvi. When a reconnaissance in force was made before the first, the garrison retired, without a show of resistance, on the stronger works at Bastia. Hood was hotly in favour of besieging them at once, for Nelson, acting as pioneer, had reported in favour of the attempt. But the soldiers estimated the garrison at 2,000 and the General condemned the scheme as "rash" and "visionary" and refused with his 1,500 men even to think of it. He was a talented officer of ripe experience. He was well versed in siege works and his opinion was worthy of close attention. Yet Hood rejected it without a scruple and accepted Nelson's instead.

As Nelson was younger than many of his captains Lord Hood in proceeding to Bastia took care to leave behind all who were senior to his favourite. For troops the Admiral had to rely on himself. He landed his marines, some thousand strong, and a body of seamen under Nelson. This game little band acted as army and siege train. The ground was difficult; the defences stout. But the arms of the sailors were stouter. They made roads. They levelled platforms. They erected batteries. They removed mountains. Nelson might well be proud of them. Their gunnery practice was magnificent; but then, as they modestly explained, shooting was on land an easy affair after a rolling deck at sea.

And now reliable information reached Nelson that there were not 2,000 in the town after all, but more than 4,500. How many commanders would have found in this honourable occasion for withdrawal! Nelson did not even report it to head-quarters. It was not that he was insensible to peril. But heaven had endowed him in sevenfold degree with a fearlessness of responsibility not given at all to ordinary mortals. In London he had seen a picture that caught and held his fancy. It was "The Death of Wolfe" by Sir Benjamin West, P.R.A. Nelson assured the artist that whenever he saw the picture it set him in love with death.\* His mind reverted to the picture now. "What would the immortal Wolfe have done?" he asks in one of his letters. "Beat the enemy if he perished in the attempt!"

\* Nelson asked West why more pictures of the kind were not painted. West laughingly said, "For want of sitters," little thinking that the man before him would serve as a model for a companion canvas.

Towards the end of May, 1794, the fortress surrendered. Its 4,500 men piled their arms at the feet of his faithful "Jacks" and 1,000 marines. Nelson laughingly exulted. He had always been of opinion, he said, that one Englishman was a match for three of any other race on earth.

Calvi now alone held out and the Toulon fleet, beginning to bestir itself, demanded Lord Hood's immediate presence elsewhere. Happily additional soldiers had by this time arrived, and the siege was undertaken in form. The new General, however, asked for a naval brigade and this was put under Nelson's command. With him went Captain Benjamin Hallowell, a hero with the stature and strength of a giant and the soured-faced pleasantries of an executioner. The sailors carried out the same arduous duties they had performed so admirably at Bastia. It was cruel work though, tugging and hauling in the pitiless heat of the dog days; and the men fell sick from sunstroke and fatigue. Nelson enjoyed good health. There was not enough of him, he said, to offer resistance to fever. He was like a reed among the oaks, bending while others were broken. But suddenly misfortune befell him. It was seven o'clock in the morning of 12th July. Nelson, according to his custom, was in the most advanced battery. A shot struck the parapet at his feet. The splintered stone was flung with violence upwards: and Nelson felt the blood stream down his face. His right eye also was cut; but he took little note of it, rejoicing that the other wounds were only superficial. The surgeons told him that all would be well. He was bandaged and returned to his work. But the injured eye did not recover. Little by little the sight faded, and in a few months it was almost gone. Nelson could distinguish light from darkness, but that was all. "Never mind!" he said in his plucky way, "I can see very well with the other."

Calvi fell in August; and Corsica was won. Its capture set the crown on Lord Hood's career,\* and gave his fleet the position they required. The chief honours by the admission of all belonged to Nelson. Lord Hood, who had been unwilling to say much after Bastia for fear of reflecting discredit on the army, now spoke up nobly for him. "His unremitting zeal and exertion I cannot sufficiently express." Yet Nelson received not the smallest reward.

\* The King raised him a step in the peerage, from Baron to Viscount Hood.



"Some day I'll have a Gazette of my own," he said; but his heart was sore; and when at the approach of winter Lord Hood went home, he began for a while to lose hope and questioned his power to rise in his profession. It was at this time that he nursed the thought of early retirement and a tranquil country life devoid of care. He dreamed of a little cottage with thatched roof, its white walls canopied with honeysuckle, a garden with high red walls and elms beyond, a cloudless blue sky overhead, and the hum of bees swinging among the hollyhocks.

Lord Hood went home primarily in search of health. It was generally anticipated that he would soon be back and Admiral Hotham, his second in command, took charge of the fleet while he was away. The arrangement was only intended to be temporary, but as ill-luck would have it, Lord Hood was detained, and as a result the temporary arrangement received the sanction of time. Hotham was a gentle, easy-going soul; affable to all and universally popular. He had seen varied experience in the American War and repeatedly distinguished himself. He was punctual to perform, cool in a crisis, never in the way, never out of it, plucky, indispensable; the ideal second in command. But he had never before held command in chief: and whatever others may have thought of his abilities he rated them low enough himself, and felt at times unequal to his task. He would not expose a fleet to the risks that he had accepted gaily in a single ship. He liked to have his whole brood tucked safely under his wings, and was for ever calling them back if they grew venturesome or independent.

If Hood had returned there is little doubt that either by an unrelaxed blockade he would have kept the Toulon fleet closely imprisoned; or by subtle lures he would have drawn them out, savagely fallen on them hip and thigh, and trampled the residue under foot. What did Hotham elect to do? He certainly did not keep watch and ward on Toulon. The French found no sentinels before the door, and they swaggered out to rescue Corsica. When, however, on 10th March they sighted the English fleet, their courage would seem to have suddenly run out of the heels of their boots.

On 13th March they were still streaming in the direction of Toulon with the English ships still in pursuit. There was a fresh breeze and the fugitives looked as if they were certain to get away. But at eight o'clock an accident happened. The *Ça Ira*,

third from the rear of the French, ran on board her next ahead and lost her fore and main topsails. She began to lag at once and drop to leeward. Here then was a chance for the British fleet! But the British fleet were nowhere near. Admiral Hotham's ship, the *Britannia*, and all but one of her companions were miles and miles astern.

All but one! The *Agamemnon*, far in advance of the rest, was placed exactly in that particular spot most advantageous for an immediate attack. How she got there no man shall say. It is enough that she was there and there alone.

The debris from aloft hung over the *Ça Ira's* side. She was in sorry plight and the French Admiral not only sent a frigate to tow her, but detailed two ships of the line to stand by in case she needed them. The *Ça Ira* was a ship of eighty-four guns, large enough to stow the entire *Agamemnon* in her hold; her two protectors were the *Jean Barras* of seventy-four guns and the *Sans-culotte*, a first-rate of one hundred and twenty; rabid hot Jacobins all of them.

They had little enough to make them afraid unless the main body of the British came up. Yet Nelson resolved to attack at once in his absurd little sixty-four.

His first idea was to run right under the stern of the *Ça Ira* before he discharged a gun. But the *Ça Ira*\* found the range with her stern-chasers and at once made dangerous practice. "Not a shot," said Nelson, "missed some part of the ship, and latterly the masts were struck every time." Arguing that if he were crippled aloft he would be unable to fight at all, and that if he did not fight no one else could, he suddenly resolved to begin from where he was, even if it was a hundred yards short. Jamming his helm hard a-starboard he brailed up his spanker and after-sails and as the canvas shivered and the *Agamemnon* fell away he poured the whole of a double-shotted broadside into the stern of his wretched enemy. The instant all the guns were fired he braced up the after-yards, and put the helm a-port: then at the crucial moment sidled once more to discharge another broadside. This quick alternation of "strike" and "follow up" he practised with

\* "Ça Ira" ("Twill speed") was one of the most popular Revolutionary songs, until Rouget de Lisle with the "Marseillaise" surpassed it. Even Marie Antoinette, it is said, could not refrain from strumming it on her harpsichord.

rhythmical precision from eleven to one o'clock. By so doing he not only brought the entire strength of his own little ship to bear on the weakest part of his tremendous antagonist, but entirely prevented her from making the slightest use of a single gun on either of her broadsides.

The *Ça Ira* was soon a complete wreck. She had been allowed no moment to repair her previous damage, and the *Agamemnon* had brought down her mizen topmast, mizen topsail and cross-jack yard. She could endure the torture no longer and with the help of the frigate hove to and brought her broadside to bear. The *Agamemnon* immediately closed and pounded her bravely at half pistol shot. But now that the fight was a standing one the *Jean Barras* and the *Sans-culotte* by dint of hoisting top-gallant sails rolled clumsily to help their friend. Nelson saw that at last it was time to be gone and bore away to join his Admiral who, with wild signals flying, called aloud for his return.

The *Agamemnon's* sails and rigging were much cut about and there were holes between wind and water; but thanks to perfect handling there were but seven wounded men in the entire ship's company. And now without rest all hands were busy repairing damage above and below.

As for the *Ça Ira* her wounds were not so easily healed: and there was no port in the neighbourhood to offer her refuge. The French might abandon her if their sense of honour were blunted, but if they were resolute to save her, then they could hardly avoid a renewal of the fight, and a renewal under disadvantages. At the beginning Hotham could only oppose the French fifteen with thirteen British sail of the line and a Neapolitan seventy-four.\* The balance of numbers was now redressed: Nelson's single-handed encounter had created a position of affairs which might lead to great things on the morrow.

When the morrow dawned the English were ready for battle and the *Ça Ira* was not. She had been taken in tow by the *Censeur*, a ship nearly as large as herself; but her position to leeward still left her dangerously exposed. Admiral Hotham directed an immediate attack to be made upon her; and the French, to meet the menace, turned their whole line about on the opposite tack. They had no intention of accepting battle to the death, but designed, if

\* Captain Caracciolo.

such were possible, a rescue of the threatened ships. The leading sail of the English line were too quick, and cut in between victims and would-be rescuers. In doing so they encountered a cross fire under which they suffered severely; but their object was attained, and the French, finding rescue impossible and deeming honour satisfied, luffed out of immediate range. In this second round of the battle Nelson played a prominent part. His *Agamemnon* was well advanced in the English array; and though suffering less severely than the two that led the line, enjoyed the unwonted luxury of fighting both broadsides together.

The *Ça Ira* and *Censeur* made a gallant defence, losing between them 600 men. But fate had decreed their loss, and with dramatic appropriateness they both hauled down their colours to the *Agamemnon*. Admiral Hotham was delighted. It had seemed to him on the previous day that he was little likely to overhaul the foe, still less engage him in battle. And now he had captured two prizes. It was really very gratifying. Good news from the Mediterranean would be sure of its welcome at home, and could not fail to bring its reward.\* His kindly face was wreathed in smiles, and as he walked the quarter-deck he rubbed his hands together.

When every allowance has been made for his elation, it must be admitted that Admiral Hotham's engagement is wanting in the elements that compose a first-class battlepiece. Let it be compared with the Battle of The Saints; for it opened in similar fashion. Suppose Rodney had been in Hotham's place. Can anybody doubt that he would have abandoned the *Ça Ira* and *Censeur* and flung himself upon their larger squadron the moment that the Frenchmen went about! Only by so doing could a decisive victory have been won. The French indeed protested that the battle was drawn, for although two vessels were left with the British, they were simply the victims of unavoidable mischance. There is a certain amount of reason in this argument, but the grounds on which it is based are grotesquely unjust. The *Ça Ira* and the *Censeur* were not the victims of mischance, but the indisputable spoils of Nelson's *Agamemnon*.

If then Hotham was satisfied with the reflected glory of the

\* On his arrival home Hotham was raised to the peerage; less, it was whispered, for merit than for importunity!

day, what were the feelings of Nelson who had won the battle by himself? They find expression in a memorable letter which he wrote home shortly afterwards: "I wish to be an Admiral and in command of the English fleet. I should very soon either do much or be ruined. My disposition cannot bear tame and slow measures. Sure I am, had I commanded our fleet on the 14th, that either the whole French fleet would have graced my triumph or I should have been in a confounded scrape. I went on board Admiral Hotham as soon as our firing grew slack in the van and the *Ça Ira* and *Censeur* had struck, to propose to him leaving our two crippled ships, the two prizes and four frigates to themselves and to pursue the enemy; but he, much cooler than myself, said, 'We must be contented. We have done very well.' Now, had we taken ten sail and allowed the eleventh to escape . . . I could never have called it well done." \*

His remarkable share in this battle should have been sufficient to make Nelson's fortune. And yet it did little to bring his merits into greater prominence. Rumour from Whitehall said that in June there would be an unusual promotion to flag-rank in order to celebrate the first anniversary of Lord Howe's glorious victory. Nelson began to anticipate the event with something like dismay. The interest of the war was focussed in the Mediterranean and a junior Admiral would be certainly dismissed to a dull and distant station. He need have had no fear. There was an unprecedented promotion. Thirty-five captains received their flag. But Nelson was not among the number.

It must not be supposed that Hotham was jealous of his talented subordinate or underrated his abilities. If his public acknowledgments were lukewarm, the private manifestations of his gratitude were unmistakable. Whenever there was anything special to be done, he always selected Nelson. Whenever a squadron was detached for particular service, he invariably put Nelson in command. But what satisfaction there might have been in this was discounted by the fruitlessness of all his campaigning. The Toulon fleet might cruise as it would. He made no attempt to blockade it. Warships came through the Strait from Brest. He made no pretence

\* One of the French ships "fell out" during the night of the 12th; another on the night following; two were taken on the 14th. Thus of the original fifteen, eleven were at large when Nelson interviewed the Admiral.

of waylaying them. Reinforcements joined his own standard; to Nelson's delight came his fellow-probationer, Captain Troubridge of the *Culloden*.\* And yet Hotham lifted no finger to find the French and deliver a smashing blow.

In November, 1795, he suddenly resigned his command. It may have been that he felt unable any longer to endure the strain. It may have been that he only presided so long in the hope that Lord Hood would come out again and restore the old relations. Whatever the reality he went home on the score of ill-health, though no one had noticed any symptoms of disease.

Admiral Sir John Jervis was appointed to command in his stead.

The figure of Jervis has flitted from time to time through previous pages. The reader must now become more perfectly acquainted with him. He was born in Staffordshire in 1735, the son of a lawyer. When he was twelve years old his father received appointment as Counsel to the Admiralty and removed to Greenwich. Here John moved in nautical circles and was bitten with the idea of becoming a sailor. His father was determined to make a lawyer of him, but even at that age Jervis had a will of his own and, failing to secure parental consent, went off to sea without it. His father cut him off with twenty pounds which may have been better than the proverbial shilling, but was quite inadequate for his needs as naval officer. In consequence during his early career Jervis underwent the most pinching privation. Many a youth of his age would have returned in search of a fatted calf. But Jervis was no prodigal. He resolved to live upon his pay, and the more difficult the task became, the more steadfast grew his resolution. He sold his effects and slept on bare boards. He patched his clothes when they wore out, cleaned his own shoes, and washed his own linen. He found penury an uncomfortable school, but in it he learned two noble qualities, self-reliance and self-control. At an age when most young fellows think more of pleasure than of anything else Jervis practised the rigid self-denial of a medieval ascetic.

\* Since *Seahorse* days Troubridge had made for himself quite a name in Indian seas. At the beginning of the Revolutionary War he had been captured by the French and rescued by Lord Howe on the Glorious First of June.

At the time of the Seven Years' War, the first in which Jervis took part, there was a commander whose rugged simplicity of character mirrored all that appealed to him most. It was a happy day on which he made the acquaintance of Saunders. With Saunders he sailed in the "Cargo of Courage"; by Saunders he was chosen to carry home the captive *Foudroyant*. He was not forgotten when Saunders sailed for Quebec and when the city fell the Admiral selected him to carry home dispatches. After this he received command of a sloop and with Rodney was present at the bombardment of Havre. Just as the war ended he was made post into the *Gosport*, being then twenty-six years of age.

During the interval of peace Jervis struck up a warm friendship with Samuel Barrington and from him learned to look upon himself as the only possible successor of Hawke. When the American War broke out, Jervis stood high on the list of captains; when he received command of his old friend, the *Foudroyant*, he found himself included in Keppel's fleet, his lucky star seemed to have risen. But instead there came to him, as to Barrington, to Stan and all Keppel's friends, a period of almost total eclipse. No one fought better at Ushant than Captain Jervis; no one needed Keppel's assistance at his trial. But after Keppel's resignation the *Foudroyant* remained in the Channel Fleet, doomed to inactivity that would have been perpetual if Gibraltar had not called for occasional relief. In this dull period Jervis could not draw attention to himself. He did, however, draw attention to his ship. The *Foudroyant* was already well known. There was the romantic story of her capture. There was her pace which enabled her to overtake any other battleship afloat. But after she had had time to make Jervis's acquaintance, young officers were sent on board of her that they might see with their own eyes the perfection of management and discipline that gave her a name throughout the fleet as the model man-of-war.

When North resigned in 1782 and Keppel came to the Admiralty and Howe took possession of the Channel, Jervis's fortune revived. In April a hostile squadron was sighted off Brest and chased by the British. The French showed a clean pair of heels to all but Jervis's ship—which they themselves had built. The *Pégase*, seventy-four, covered the rear of the fugitives; and the *Foudroyant* ran after her on a parallel course to leeward. With only a single foe behind

and plenty of friends at hand the *Pégase* grew bold and, seizing the favourable moment, endeavoured to cross her enemy's bows, intending to rake. The thrust was dexterous. But Jervis with greater agility clewed up his mainsail, took in his studding sails, suddenly sprang his luff and parried the movement. Then without a pause he put his helm hard up, ran under his opponent's stern, fought her for forty-five minutes, shot away her mizen and foretop, and brought her colours down. A duel between frigates was common enough. But it was rare for battleships to engage in single combat, and rarer still to engage with decisive result. To have captured a battleship in single fight without the loss of a man was an achievement hitherto only dreamed of. The engagement too was happily timed. The result of Rodney's victory was not then known, and the Empire seemed to totter on the verge. Everywhere men drained their cups to the *Foudroyant*; and as for her captain he was made a Knight of the Bath, and received His Majesty's gracious permission to add to his ancient coat of arms a bridled Pegasus.

A few years later Sir John received his flag; and, when the Revolutionary War began, was nominated to the West Indian command. Here by the superb management of his fleet he confirmed the golden opinions formed of him, and by the speedy reduction of Martinique, Guadeloupe and St. Lucia demanded instant transference to a more important sphere. His return to England coincided with Hood's, and though the Government would not disturb Hotham in the midst of war, they sent out Jervis to replace him the moment they knew that he was ready to retire.

The Mediterranean Fleet, according to custom, welcomed their new commander with a salute of guns. Before the smoke had rolled away they saw the signal to unmoor broken at the *Victory's* masthead. "No more skulking at San Fiorenzo," wrote Nelson joyfully.

Sir John came to the Mediterranean fully resolved to make of his fleet a fighting machine as efficient as the old *Foudroyant*. Those who knew him best extended their sympathy to the fleet. For the hardships of his early life had given Jervis a will of flint and steel and adamant. And fifty years of naval discipline had taught him the best way to impose his will on others. Severity



was the mark of Sir John. Some would have called it brutal severity, others inhuman severity; but all would have agreed that Sir John would go any lengths to attain his end. A cold, passionless, pitiless tyrant he seemed; a man of blood and iron who cared not a jot for the pain he gave. His figure was small, but his voice was like a growl of thunder; and before the stare of his cold blue eye no man dared call his soul his own.

There have been men like Sir John before, men of unsparing sternness and calculating cruelty. But the most of them have been bullies: bullies by nature, or bullies by the accident of high position. Jervis was not a bully. Without doubt he appeared as one, for he punished not only those who had done what they ought not to have done, but with unmistakable relish those also who had failed to do what Jervis expected of them. No man escaped. If there were floggings for the foremast hand and death for mutineers, lieutenants had all their leave cut off, captains were kept up all the night practising evolutions, recalcitrant flag-officers were bundled home, and scathing reprimands were flung impartially broadcast.

But Sir John was not at heart a bully. His severity was the severity of the "Bench". The judge as he enters the court wears an air of solemn gravity which he maintains till sentence is given. The sentence may rightly consign some sorry wretch to the block; but the session over, the judge puts off his robe and reveals to his intimates a smiling face, a kind heart instinct with charity, and a deep-grained love of a joke. Such a man to the life was Jervis. And the simile may be carried a step farther. The judge knows full well that he borrows majesty from his robe; yet will he at times betray his humanity by a good-humoured jest in court. The tales of "Old Jarvie" are numberless, but one in particular brings his picture alive from its frame.

He loved to have all things done with decency and decorum. With him the hoisting of the colours was not a daily routine, but a ceremonial parade. The marines presented arms, the band played "God save the King," and the Commander-in-Chief appeared gorgeous in full dress uniform. As the flag ascended, every head was uncovered.

It was probably only from inadvertence that the captain of the maintop on one occasion omitted to remove his hat. Before he



SIR JOHN JERVIS, K.C.B.,  
AFTERWARDS EARL ST. VINCENT

Nelson's patron and best friend. A keen judge of men, a strict disciplinarian, a wit, and a great commander. He is wearing an Admiral's uniform and the Order of the Bath.



had time to realize his error, or meditate on the enormity of his offence, the Commander-in-Chief ordered him aft and administered a dozen lashes!

The news of this went the round of the fleet, and a certain lieutenant with more wit than discretion described the episode in a parody on the Third Chapter of Daniel. "The Commander-in-Chief made an image of blue and gold whose height was about five feet seven inches, and set it up on the quarter-deck. . . . And the captain cried aloud and said, 'To you it is commanded, O officers, parson, seamen and marines that at what time ye hear the sound of the trumpet, flute, horn, clarionet, drum, fife and all kinds of music, ye take off your hats and worship the blue and gold image which the Commander-in-Chief hath set up'." And much more in the same mode.

The skit of course was handed round, and of course fell into "Jarvie's" hands. It was not long before he discovered the author and sent for him. Conversation drifted from one topic to another till dinner was announced. Then, although he was entertaining that night every captain in the fleet, the Commander-in-Chief insisted that the lieutenant should grace his board. When dinner was finished, however, he set him aloft upon a dais, and handing him a paper bade him read it. It was in vain that the penitent author cast imploring glances at his host. In a voice of abject misery he stumbled through the first ten verses, and no one present dared to smile. When he came to the eleventh, "Then was the Commander-in-Chief full of fury and the form of his visage was changed," the company could hold themselves no longer and dissolved in noisy mirth. As for the culprit he read to the end, wishing he had never been born.

Judgment was then given.

"Lieutenant," said "Old Jarvie" with a twinkle in his eye, "you have been found guilty of parodying Holy Writ to bring your Commander-in-Chief into disrespect. The sentence is that you proceed to England at once on three months' leave. Upon your return report to me to take dinner here again."

The truth is that with his judicial frame of mind Jervis had in a supreme degree the gift of judging men. With unerring discernment he read them through as if they were so many books. To those who deserved his esteem, to those whose thoughts were for

England's good and the honour of the service, no one could possibly have been kinder; but woe betide the negligent, and the ease-loving and Sir John's pet abomination "old women—in the guise of young men".

The new commander was quick to discover the three best men in the fleet. The moody Hallowell received a singular mark of favour; the Admiral addressed him as "Ben". The courteous knightly Troubridge was honoured as "The Bayard of the British Fleet". And gentle Collingwood, a late arrival, whose gallant part in the "First of June" had brought him no access of fortune, now found himself appreciated without apparent reason.

Nelson was not at San Fiorenzo when the Admiral arrived. He was, as usual, employed on one of Hotham's commissions. In a week or two he returned, and on 19th January, 1796, went on board the *Victory*. The meeting that followed may well be taken as the turning point in his career. Up till now he had found plenty to appreciate him. But he needed a patron, one who would give unlimited scope to his ability and endorse the value of his services. And at last his patron took him by the hand.

This one interview sufficed. "Jarvie's" favours followed instantly. He offered the *Agamemnon's* captain a seventy-four or a ninety. His opinion rose sensibly higher when the offer was refused. Like his predecessor he selected Nelson for all independent commands, for "his zeal, activity and enterprise cannot," he wrote, "be surpassed". He conferred upon him the rank of Commodore, second class; and after a decent interval gave him leave to hoist the broad pendant. Nelson was very grateful. He whispered to Sir John his fears that promotion ere long might banish him elsewhere. "I cannot bear the thought," he said, "of leaving your command." Jervis comforted him. When the dilatory flag arrived, it should be hoisted in the Mediterranean and nowhere else in the world.

If Jervis had taken up the Mediterranean command the moment that Hood laid it down, the history of the world might have been different.

Hotham chose to regard himself as a stop-gap and a substitute. In reality, whether he admitted it or no, he was England's representative in the chief theatre of the war at the war's most critical period. In 1795, his year of office, the league against France lost

more than one of its principals, and England and Austria found themselves alone. It was more than ever necessary that they should fight shoulder to shoulder: and this was not difficult, although Austria derived her strength from military and Britain from naval power. Austria had possessions in Lombardy, and Lombardy between Alps and Apennines opened to the Mediterranean. Here then was the key to the campaign and Hotham could easily have held it. Had he done so, it would have been impossible for the French ever to have invaded Italy.

His entire failure to co-operate with his friends would have mattered less if he had fought a battle of the good old-fashioned sort, or even if he had sealed up the Toulon fleet. But as he did neither of these things, his term of office can only be described as an unmixed calamity. The French without hindrance from him made their preparations and under his very nose sent round by sea the heavy guns they required in Lombardy. In the spring of 1796 all was ready and General Bonaparte came south to take command. Jervis was then but newly arrived; too late to help the Austrians, too late to stop the French.

Had he but come twelve months before!

It is difficult to think of a fleet which contained both Jervis and Nelson as lacking in prestige. Yet so it was. The British Mediterranean Fleet for the time was no more effective than Mathews' in the days of the Austrian Succession. Its impotence and the dazzling brightness of Bonaparte's successes in Italy persuaded inconstant Spain to throw in her lot with France.

This alliance was for the British the chief event of the year. It put into the field against them a combined force of forty sail. And Jervis had not even the fleet of his predecessor. Hotham by the laxity of his blockade had allowed certain of the French ships to escape, and then made matters worse by cutting off a detachment of his own to go in search of them.

The only way to affect the situation and change the current of the war was to win a mighty battle in the Mediterranean. And Jervis had fifteen ships; fifteen ships against forty. He was ready to do what he could. A few months sufficed to instil into his fleet a new spirit of discipline and energy. But the Government at home were timid. And who can wonder? Such a state of things would have been bad enough in the Channel with friendly shores and

handy dockyards. There was no base in the central Mediterranean. Corsica was worse than useless; for the population had grown unfriendly and the island could be held only with their consent. There was nothing else for it. Word was sent to Jervis to relinquish the Mediterranean, evacuate all strongholds and fall back on Gibraltar.

By this confession of weakness England rendered inevitable the overthrow of her ally. And the collapse of Austria left her to face unaided the crisis of the following year.

In December, 1796, Admiral Jervis anchored his fleet at Gibraltar. There was still one post to be abandoned; Elba, which he had seized as an outpost to spy upon Bonaparte. He therefore instructed Nelson to take a frigate and hasten with all dispatch to rescue the garrison. Nelson set out in the *Minerve*; and on the way met a Spanish frigate *La Sabina*. She resisted bravely and the sound of firing brought men-of-war to her help. Before they arrived Nelson had captured his foe and sent a prize-crew on board her. A chase began. The *Minerve* was no longer speedy as before the battle, and the Spaniards gained. But the situation was saved by Nelson's lieutenant in the prize. He was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow, robust and muscular; with ruddy complexion, bushy eyebrows and plenty of chin; a man who could have carried Nelson in his arms; a man with a ringing laugh and an unruffled temper; a man with the sweetest disposition in the world; a man whom Nelson learned to love as son and brother and father in one. Thomas Hardy drew the danger on himself. He hoisted the Union Jack to *La Sabina's* masthead with the Spanish colours trailing underneath. Such insolence could not unpunished go. The dons swooped down upon him; and the *Minerve* slipped away and escaped.

THE BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT,  
OR  
THE BATTLE OF VALENTINE'S DAY

FEBRUARY 14, 1797

Nothing could illustrate better the importance to England of her Mediterranean Fleet than the situation created by its withdrawal in the winter of 1796. Forty hostile ships were set at liberty.

What was to prevent them from leaving the Mediterranean and joining the fleet at Brest? The Directory were planning an invasion of Britain. At Brest their armies were ready. Their alliance with Dutch and Spaniards provided a grand aggregation of naval power which afforded a rosy prospect of success.

It will be argued that Gibraltar opposed a barrier; that the British could hold the Straits against all comers and padlock the Mediterranean. This unfortunately was not the case in winter-time. Gibraltar might serve the purposes of an ambuscade, but was little use as a shelter.

The storms came down and Admiral Jervis lost five of his fifteen ships!

The friendship of Portugal afforded a haven of rest, and Sir John fell back upon Lisbon. But Lisbon is 300 miles from the Straits, and of no strategic value to a fleet whose business it is to detect and intercept hostile squadrons *en route* for the English Channel.

The Spanish Mediterranean Fleet were summoned to Brest. There was nothing to prevent them from reaching the Atlantic. Once there it was exceedingly unlikely that Jervis would see them at all.

Many commanders, with Jervis's luck, would have been only too glad to avoid them. But Jervis was not as other men. He only asked that he might meet his foes; and it was ordained that he should do so.

These were the threads that drew them to him.

The Government at home sent him five new ships, and directed the little squadron to cruise off Cape St. Vincent, which lying midway between Lisbon and the Rock was convenient, wherever Sir John might be. Meanwhile the Spaniards received stringent orders not on any account to attempt their journey in a single run. For rest, refreshment and refit they were to call without fail at Cadiz.\*

Obtaining a south-easterly wind they ran through the Straits without mishap. But as they did so the breeze freshened, and they were carried far into the Atlantic, miles to the westward of Cadiz, and miles to the north of it. This would have been a

\* The precaution undoubtedly resulted from a study of the Lagos campaign (1759).



positive advantage if they had been making straight for Brest. As it was, they waited for a favourable wind that should bear them landwards again.

And thus they hovered off Cape St. Vincent, Jervis's rendez-vous!

Nelson meanwhile was on his return journey from Elba. At Gibraltar he secured Hardy's release by an exchange of prisoners; and learning all that had happened in his absence darted off in his frigate to join Sir John.

Topsails had just been sheeted home when two battleships appeared in pursuit. Excitement was general: and in the midst of it rose a cry "Man overboard!" Hardy quick as thought manned the jollyboat and went in search. But now the *Minerve* was well under way and the strong eastward current that sets through the Straits carried the rescue party away from their friends right into the arms of the foe. It seemed morally certain that Hardy was doomed to a second imprisonment. Nelson, however, was not the man to forget a kindness. "By God! I'll not lose Hardy," he cried. "Back that mizen topsail." The dons watched this manœuvre with amazement. Could it be that a frigate was turning to bay? Impossible. This was beyond doubt a ruse. There were other ships within hail. Caution was necessary; a little less headlong zeal. They shortened sail and dropped astern!

On the night next following this miraculous escape (to be precise, on 12th February), Nelson had a still stranger adventure. He ran by accident into the very middle of the Spanish fleet. How he escaped is a mystery. There was a haze upon the water. But he must have been seen. Perhaps the Spaniards took him for one of themselves. He scurried away with his news and next day joined the Admiral. Jervis had picked up the reinforcements off the Cape and now had fifteen ships. As battle might be but a matter of hours, he bade Nelson be quick and shift his pendant to the *Captain*, seventy-four.

Jervis did not attempt to turn in that night. He made his will, and thought on the morrow. Ever an early riser he was on deck before daybreak and paced restlessly up and down. He was lost in thought, and passers-by heard him speaking to himself. "A victory is very essential," he muttered, "to England at this moment." If anything he understated the truth. A victory at

sea could alone relieve Britain from the nightmare of panic that overshadowed her. The menace of hostile fleets at sea, and the ominous figure of the Corsican had plunged her into the depths of abject misery. For the first time since its foundation the Bank of England was on the verge of bankruptcy. The nation had lost faith in itself. And here was Jervis reasoning like a statesman in the unheroic hours of early morning. A victory? How was it to be procured? If the Spaniards outnumbered him, should he engage them? Supposing they had twenty ships? Supposing they had more than twenty? When had a decisive naval victory been gained with inferior numbers? Sir John's head shrank between his shoulders, and as the dawn rose out of the sea his eyes glistened like steel. England had lost faith in herself and faith in her ships as well, but rooted as firm as a Wealden oak was the faith of her Admiral.

As the hours went by he was joined on the quarter-deck by Captain Hallowell who had lost his own ship in the storm and was serving in the *Victory* as volunteer. The two friends walked and chatted together. The morning had opened with thick fog, but in spite of it reports came in of Spanish ships looming through the haze. From time to time Robert Calder, Sir John's chief of staff, approached with the latest news. "There are eight sail of the line, Sir John." "Very well, sir." "There are twenty sail of the line, Sir John." "Very well, sir." "There are twenty-five sail of the line." "Very well, sir." "There are twenty-seven, Sir John." "No more of that," said the little man, out of patience. "The die is cast. If there were fifty sail I would go through them." This speech delighted Hallowell. With a familiarity which no one else would have dared to use, "Ben" patted his Admiral on the back and cried, "That's right, Sir John. That's right. And by God we'll give them a damned good licking!"

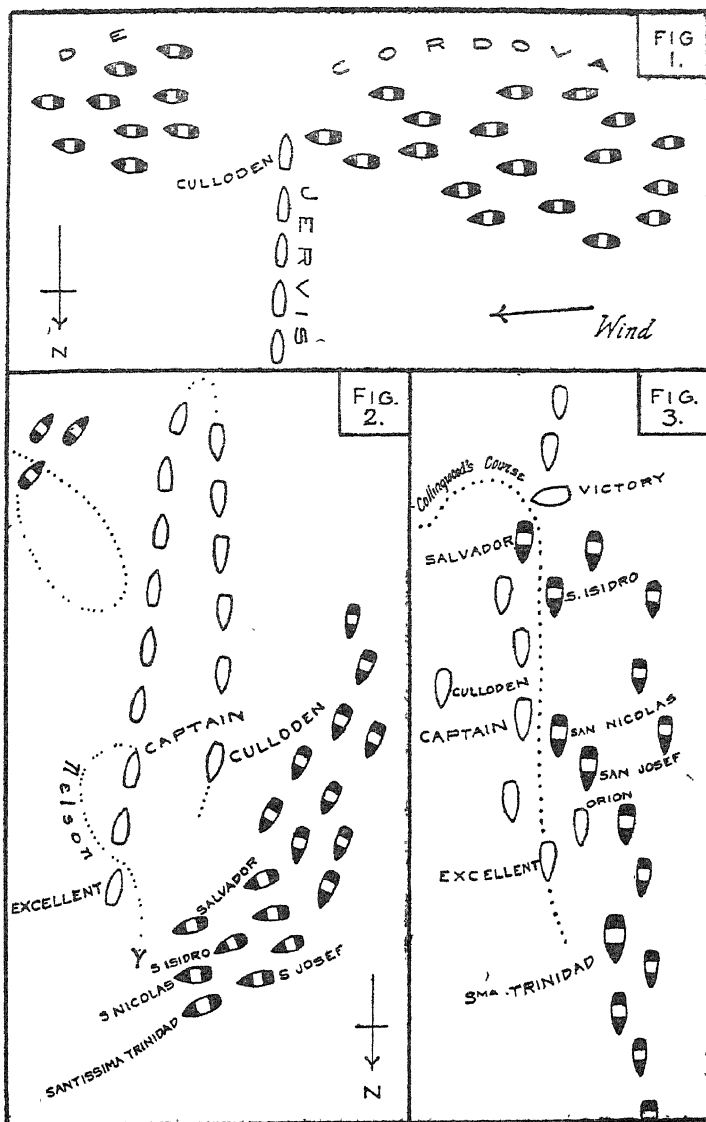
By ten o'clock the sun had scattered the morning mists and it was possible to survey the field of battle and the disposition of the forces. The English were in magnificent order. They were advancing southward on the starboard tack with Cape St. Vincent under their lee some twenty-four miles away. Troubridge in the *Culloden* led the line, and the *Victory*, blue at the main, was seventh astern.

The Spaniards during the night had found the westerly breeze

they required and were steering east to Cadiz. They presented a truly formidable appearance. The flag of Don José de Cordova was carried in proud Castilian fashion by the tremendous *Santissima Trinidad*, the only four-decker ever launched. Around her were gathered six vessels of one hundred and twelve guns, and twenty others, the smallest a seventy-four : in all a fleet of twenty-seven, outnumbering Jervis's by nearly two to one. But the Spaniards were unprepared for the English approach, which until the last moment was concealed by the fog. Their own array was frankly processional; far removed on the one hand from mob-like confusion, on the other still farther from strict line ahead. Had this irregularity been their only fault, they might still have found time to amend it, but as will often happen with an unrehearsed procession, the head and tail had drifted apart and were separated by a dangerous interval.

Jervis leapt at it. He signalled his fleet to crowd on sail and pass through the gap in line ahead ; for by the menace alone he would add to their confusion and so deny his enemies any occasion to reform ; while if he actually succeeded in cutting their line he would be enabled to throw the whole of his strength on either division of the force he severed. [MAP. FIG. 1.]

About half-past eleven the battle began. The *Culloden* approaching the fateful gap was heading off the leader of the windwardmost group. Both ships made the best of their pace and it looked as if a collision could hardly be avoided. As the Spaniard was a three-decker and the English ship but a seventy-four, the *Culloden's* first lieutenant approached his captain to learn his pleasure. "Let the weakest fend off," said Troubridge stolidly. He waited until the ships were near enough for his gunners to see the whites of the Spaniards' eyes and then he poured into his antagonist two withering broadsides. They were double-shotted and delivered with a precision of aim and a unanimity of detonation that would have done credit to a Port-Admiral's inspection. Literally they admitted of no reply. The bulky Spaniard certainly stopped to offer none. Without discharging a single piece she luffed with alacrity, and yielded the point of contention. Thus the Britons had broken their enemy's line, and the whole of the Spanish windward squadron followed the ship that Troubridge repulsed on a new course trending to the north and parallel to that of Jervis.



THE BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT  
February 14, 1797

Had the opposing fleets been in numbers relatively equal, this preliminary skirmish must have led to the utter ruin of the Spaniards. But Jervis's position was still very far from being comfortable. Had the greater Spanish squadron lain to leeward, he might have crushed the smaller before it could interfere. But he was bound to attack the force that had the wind of him and this consisted of seventeen ships compared with his own fifteen. His chief reliance he wisely put in the regularity and discipline of his own efficient little force. There was not a ship but could use both broadsides nor one unwilling to use them.

The need was not long in declaring itself. The Spanish leeward squadron, nine battleships strong, with commendable promptitude tried to carve a way to their friends through the midst of their enemies. The task was admittedly difficult for the wind was in their teeth. But they made it no easier by selecting that particular point where the *Victory* breasted the waves. Jervis's port broadside was waiting for them, though his starboard guns were busily engaged. He even backed a topsail to make his aim secure and poured such a hideous fire into the first of them that she fell away and exposing her stern was raked with direful effect.

But Jervis's main business was with the windward squadron, who were sailing north on the larboard tack while he sailed south on the starboard. This movement if prolonged could only result in an exchange of cannonades.\* He could remedy this by reversing his line, tacking all of his ships together, and this without doubt is what he would have done if there had been to leeward no Spaniards at all, or if the Spaniards to leeward had been less active. But their attempted diversions obliged him to prolong his advance to the southward lest they weathered that end of his line. With two things to do at the self-same time, his only way was to tack his ships in succession one after the other. By this means his line would continue to interpose a wall between the two Spanish squadrons, and his van would be able to re-open fire on the engaged force to windward just about the time that the ships of his rear began to lose touch with them.

Upon Troubridge as leader of the English van devolved the duty of initiating the new manœuvre; but as Jervis gave the order for the signal to be hoisted an astonishing sight met his gaze. So

\* Cp. Ushant.

confidently had the *Culloden* expected the message that before Jervis's command had fully declared itself she broke the answering signal at her masthead and shivered her sails to go about. Sir John was delighted. "Look at Troubridge," he cried. "He handles his ship as if the eyes of all England were upon him! And would to God they were!"

Gamely emulating their gallant commander in the *Santissima Trinidad*, the Spaniards in the wind fought well. Their guns were not manned as the British were, but for an hour or so the battle raged and the thunder of the gun-peals rattled with hollow rolling.

Then with arresting suddenness the unlooked-for crisis came!

It was about one o'clock and the leaders of the Spanish windward column were at length beginning to draw away past the ships that brought up the English rear; past Nelson's *Captain*, last but two from the end, and Collingwood's *Excellent*, last of all. As yet the renewed attack of Sir John's inverted van had not had time to make its pressure felt, and for the moment Don José was free to act. He put up his helm and wore his ship to resume again the easterly course which Jervis's skill up to now had frustrated. His exact intention is not quite evident. He may have meant to reconstitute his line in orderly array, or he may have hoped to link his ships with the other squadron to leeward. It is more likely that he had had punishment enough and only desired to fly before the wind to the shelter of Cadiz Bay. If he worked his will, the battle from the English point of view must be prematurely concluded or resumed under conditions far less favourable to themselves. [MAP. FIG. 2.]

All this Nelson saw in a flash. With prompt decision he at once resolved to pick up Don José's challenge and fling him back into his place. But how was he to accomplish his design? He was in command of but a single ship and the laws of the service forbade him on any occasion or excuse to leave his place. He was in command of but a single ship and Don José had behind him a division. Yet he hesitated not. There descended upon him the very spirit of Blake, the self-forgetting spirit that in Britain's cause accepts all risks and hazards. Putting his helm to starboard he wore the *Captain* out of the line and glancing between the ship in his wake and the *Excellent* astern of her he threw himself in front of the Spaniards, in front of the mighty *Santissima*

*Trinidad* of one hundred and thirty guns, the *San Josef* of one hundred and twelve, the *Salvador del Mundo* of one hundred and twelve, the *San Nicolas* of eighty, the *San Isidro* of seventy-four, and other two with names unknown, a first-rate and a third. Seven ships to the *Captain*, the *Captain* a seventy-four.

Alone she faced them, confident, undaunted ; but such a contest could not last. Happily for Nelson and the country he served, his sacrifice was not completed. For fifteen minutes or more he held his own, and then from the head of the inverted van came Troubridge, plunging into the fray to save his friend. Side by side the *Captain* and *Culloden* fought for an hour like the wonderful heroes of a bygone mythical age. The very fact that they were not captured speaks more than eloquence for their deeds. Captured ! They all but took the *Trinidad* ; and as for her attendant three-deckers, gored as by the horns of a stag they lay like hounds exhausted. Their guns lolled idly out of their ports and the red blood ran from their scuppers.

Meanwhile the devotion of the *Captain* and the *Culloden* did not escape the notice of Sir John : but while he thanked heaven for sending him such gallant creatures, he feared they might well be overpowered before the *Victory* herself could reach them. He therefore signalled the *Excellent*, more advantageously placed, to leave her station without delay and go about to attempt their rescue. Collingwood's noble heart beat quickly as he turned at once to obey.

The situation that faced him was as follows. The windward squadron of Cordova's force, abandoning their attempt to cross the British line, had hauled their wind on the larboard tack and were once more running northward. They had picked up two of the seven whom Nelson's daring had stayed in mid-career ; but the other five had fallen in a string somewhat astern and a little to leeward ; the *Santissima Trinidad* farthest north, the *San Josef* in her wake, then the *San Nicolas*, *San Isidro*, and *Salvador del Mundo*. [MAP. FIG. 3.]

If there was one side of his profession that made a special appeal to Collingwood it was gunnery. Spending his spare time on the gun-decks, coaching the crews himself, he had exacted from his company a rate of gun-fire unsurpassed by any ship afloat. The Spaniards thought themselves fortunate if they took no more

than five minutes for a broadside. Collingwood delivered three in a minute and a half.\*

The *Salvador* surrendered before she had time to fire a gun. Before she had time to recover her surprise the *San Isidro* had hauled down her flag. The *Salvador*, seeing the danger gone, hoisted her colours anew. But Collingwood stayed not to secure his conquests. Troubridge's *Culloden* was by this time out of action: and though Nelson was still engaged, his peril was extreme. So Collingwood urged his good ship on to help the man he loved. Hauling up his mainsail just astern of the *Captain* he flung himself between her and the great *San Nicolas* whom she was fighting with her larboard batteries. So close did he go to the Spaniard "that you couldn't have put a bodkin between". And then his terrific broadsides burst out for the third time. Before them the *San Nicolas* reeled: and falling away in the face of the wind fell foul of the *San Josef*.

Collingwood pushed on. There was the *Santissima Trinidad* ahead and swift in pursuit he followed her. Hard on his heels came the *Orion*, another gallant British seventy-four, commanded by one whose fortune it seemed to be present in every fight. With laurels gathered at the Dogger Bank, with "*Kempey*," with Hood, and at The Saints Captain Saumarez, now Sir James, had but recently joined the fleet. As of old he sought the warmest corner, and added at once to its warmth.

Not far behind came Sir John himself in his mighty *Victory*. His position in the centre of his line had enabled him throughout the battle to direct and supervise; and never perhaps was there fight in which continuous control was more needful. Sir John, dissatisfied with the quarter-deck, must needs get a better view. Mounting the steps he stood on the poop. The position was exposed and his danger was quickly evidenced by the death of a marine at his side. Sir John was drenched with the man's blood from hat to knees, and presented a sorry figure. His captain ran up horrified, but Sir John was placidity itself. "I am not at all hurt," he said, wiping the blood from his mouth: and then in his coaxing voice, "Do, 'George,' try if you can get me an orange". From his perch aloft he may have seen the mean trick of the *Salvador*. He resolved on instant punishment, and bearing up he ran

\* The Gunnery School at Portsmouth is H.M.S. *Excellent*.



under her stern and raked her fore and aft. The *Salvador* yielded a second time and "Jarvie" shackled her securely.

As the rest of the line plunged past him, banging away at the Spaniards now in full retreat, Nelson may have felt a pang of regret for his own temerity. The *Captain* was a wreck, little more. Of spars, it is true, she had lost her foretopmast only, but there was not a rope that was not cut to shreds or a sail that had not been riddled. The shrouds were like shrunken spider's web, and the wheel was shot away.

His ship was past fighting and past pursuit. Yet Nelson, as ever, found work to his hand. The *San Nicolas* lay on his weather bow and he resolved to enforce her surrender. He put his helm over to starboard and called for boarders.\* The spritsail yard of the *Captain* swept over the poop of the *San Nicolas* and hooked in her mizen shrouds. Up came Captain Miller, sword in hand, at the head of the boarding-party, but Nelson gently pushed him back. "No, Miller," he said, "I must have that honour." Then "in his own active little person (for he could almost go through an Alderman's thumb-ring †)" he broke the stern windows of the *Nicolas* and climbed into her after-cabin. The Spaniards saw him coming and slammed the door to imprison him. This was not altogether an unmixed catastrophe, for it gave the Britons time to rally. The Spaniards fired among them, but Nelson splintered the door to fragments and hurried out on deck. Meanwhile a most timely turning movement had been achieved by his trusted lieutenant, Edward Berry. With a second band of boarders he had clambered into the *Captain's* beak-head and with nimble agility swarmed along the spritsail yard and climbed into the Spaniard's mizen-chains. From there in a bound he was on the poop and while Nelson scattered the dons below he hauled down their colours above.

Nelson was now faced by a new predicament. He had won the *San Nicolas*, but the *San Nicolas* was still supported by the arms of the *San Josef*, and the *San Josef* was a three-decker carrying an Admiral's flag. She rang out a challenge of musketry and

\* The helm was fixed in the gun-room or after part of the gun-deck. Its use was requisitioned when, as in the present case, an accident happened to the wheel.

† Collingwood.

her towering height commanded the prize. Nelson stayed not to think of that. He sent to Captain Miller for reinforcements, set sentries to guard the ladders of the *Nicolas*, and flung himself on the bulwarks of the *San Josef*, Berry beside him with a helping hand. Armed with the sword\* that he had inherited from his uncle Maurice Suckling, he was quickly over the side: and tradition says dashed upon his enemies crying "Victory or Westminster Abbey!"

But the Spaniards would fight no more. They already had felt the force of the British artillery, and their Admiral was dying down below. Unmolested the *San Josef* might have escaped, but her powers of active resistance were ended, and the appearance of the fiery flying commodore was too much for her nerves. An officer informed Nelson that they surrendered. The news seemed too good to be true. Nelson suspected a trick. It was not enough that the captain went down on bended knee and holding his sword by the blade offered it for his acceptance. Nelson must have the submission of every officer on board. All were hastily summoned and each gallant officer in turn tendered his weapon and his honour. Nelson could not possibly hold all the swords. He therefore handed them to one of his bargemen who stood at his side, and the bargeman with scantest ceremony tucked the lot of them under his arm "as if he were making up a faggot". Nelson, looking round to see who was with him, noted with pleasure that most were "old Agamemnons". One of these astounded the hidalgos by stepping up to the peerless hero and grasping him warmly by the hand.

As the British line came past and saw the little *Captain* with her two great prizes beside her, laughter first blended with surprise and then melted into genuine applause. Each ship in turn gave three ringing cheers for the man who had borrowed one hostile ship as a means to capture another. So unique an exploit demanded a significant title and the seamen dubbed it "Nelson's Patent Bridge for Boarding First-Rates".

The tireless Commodore now claimed privilege for his pendant and carried it on board the *Irresistible*, meaning to follow up the flying Spaniards. But it was long past four o'clock and the short February day was nearly over. Sir John decided that

\* It is at present in the United Services' Museum, Whitehall.

nothing more could be expected and recalled his myrmidons. Certainly enough had been done. There were four prizes; the *Salvador*, the *San Isidro*, the *San Nicolas* and the *San Josef*. And ten vessels at least were reduced to a state as hopeless as that of the prizes. The *Santissima Trinidad* is said to have lost 200 men and for a time was seen to haul down her flag. She was not taken. There were not enough Britons on the battlefield. But this it is that gives the victory its peculiar flavour. Never before had a battle fleet been torn in pieces, flung broadcast, and trampled on by a pigmy squadron just half its own size. The shame of her defeat was more than Spain could bear. Losing her sense of dignity, she dismissed Don José for ever from her service, and subjected her Admirals to public reprimands or instant degradation.

There was reason enough then why Sir John should be satisfied with his day's work. At five o'clock he ended the fray and sent a message to the *Irresistible*. What was in Nelson's mind as he had himself rowed across? Did he call to remembrance the grim austerity and cruel harshness of Jervis,—of Jervis who preferred obedience to strategy and subordination to the fattest prize? Under Jervis's nose he had dared to leave his station. Would Jervis break him as ruthlessly as he had broken the fleet of Spain?

All hands were mustered in the *Victory* and the Commander-in-Chief had shifted his things. Once more he was stately and dignified, "an image of blue and gold". But when Nelson came towards him, for once in his life the great little man unbent. He flung his arms round his Commadore and embraced him with a hug; telling him in the warmest and kindest words that he knew not how to thank him.\*

This was enough for Nelson; would have been, if there were nothing to follow. But, to say truth, if ever sea-victory was appreciated it was Jervis's "Valentine". The messengers who carried home the news were rapturously received: from the coast they were forwarded to London in coaches garlanded with laurel and labelled with chalk "A glorious victory!" Sir John was

\* Captain Calder is said to have drawn Sir John's attention to Nelson's wearing from the line, and to have inquired if it did not constitute a breach of discipline. "Ay!" said Jarvie somewhat snappily, "and if ever you offend in the same way I promise you my pardon beforehand."





NELSON AT THE BATTLE OF ST. VINCENT

"As happy as a lover; and attired  
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired."

On the right of the picture are the forechains of the *Captain*. In the centre Nelson leads his boarders through a window of the *San Nicolas*. Berry's party may be seen in the background scrambling along the bowsprit and the spritsail yard. Notice in the right-hand bottom corner the vast stock of the *Captain's* anchor. Just above it may be seen a chain-shot which would have done more damage among the rigging.

created an Earl and received a pension of £3,000 a year. It was no more than his due, for his well-judged rashness had saved the State. At the suggestion of the King himself he took the title of Lord St. Vincent. Captain Calder, who brought home dispatches, was knighted; and gold medals were granted to all commanders of ships.

But Nelson was the hero of the hour. Whitehall had already decided to make him an Admiral and the arrival of his flag just after the fight was appropriate and opportune. His real reward was a Knighthood of the Bath. He could have been made a baronet had he so willed: but he was disinclined to hand down to posterity a title which he could not endow with income sufficient for its dignified support. More gratifying than all was the wave of popularity which lifted him up at last. What it was that he had really done men scarcely understood. It was not for all to appreciate the intuition of the genius who could mould the very crisis of affairs into an instrument to enforce success. The ignorant made their own idol and worshipped it. They saw in Nelson one who had dashed into the very thick of things, carved his way through thronging foes, captured the first ship to stand in his path and used her as a Hercules' club to crush the biggest vessel afloat. Until the battle of St. Valentine's Day he had been to all intents unknown. From this time forth his every deed was chronicled.

## TENERIFFE

JULY 24, 1797

There is but one Nelson.—LORD ST. VINCENT.

Lord St. Vincent's labours did not end with his victory; for there were still in Cadiz twenty-three ships and these he hoped in time to lure from their anchorage and oppose again under battle conditions more favourable for complete success. With this end he appealed for reinforcements. Government were willing enough. But now the State was shaken to its foundations by the great Mutiny of the fleet. This but for his timely Valentine must have been attended by graver and more disastrous mischances. Even after Lord Howe's pacification, and the execution of Parker the Delegate, there remained several vessels in which the embers of

mutiny still glowed. By a happy expedient Government sent them to the Cadiz blockade. By this means they rid their own shoulders of a burden of intolerable anxiety ; they reinforced their deserving Admiral ; and they sent unruly turbulent ships to the one man afloat who could tame them.

Mutiny was practically impossible under St. Vincent's flag. On board the *St. George*, when she joined him, there were two cases. A court martial was opened by the Captain and concluded its sittings on a Saturday night. The men were found guilty, but claimed an interval of time in which to prepare for death. Five days were granted. St. Vincent rescinded the indulgence and had the culprits hanging from the yard-arm first thing on the following morning.

The *Marlborough* was a very bad ship. She brought an unsavoury reputation with her and, as she approached, St. Vincent signalled her to assume a kind of quarantine position so that the plague might be stayed at once. There was a case of mutiny on board. A court martial was assembled and the prisoner convicted. He was sentenced to be hanged, not as was usual by a quota of men from other ships, but by the *Marlborough's* men alone. The Captain of the *Marlborough* hastily visited the Commander-in-Chief. St. Vincent received him with pomp and circumstance. The entire ship's company was convoked and stood at attention. The Earl, removing his hat, remained throughout the interview uncovered. There was breathless silence. Captain Ellison explained that the trouble in his ship had been caused by a debate as to the proper punishment for mutiny. His company were unanimously of opinion that the death-sentence was without warrant or justification. He did not desire to see the verdict revised : but he begged to warn his Chief that any attempt to make the *Marlborough's* men unwilling executioners must be followed by consequences which he could only contemplate with horror. "Do you mean to tell me," said St. Vincent freezingly, "that you cannot command your own ship ? For if that is so, I will at once send on board somebody else who CAN !"

So the captain returned crestfallen.

Eight o'clock next morning was fixed as the hour for execution. But St. Vincent's preparations were long before that in readiness. He had caused the *Marlborough's* port-lids to be lowered, and

from every ship in the fleet he had requisitioned a launch specially manned and equipped, with a smashing carronade in her bows, twelve rounds apiece to every gun and a trusty lieutenant and gun-crew. This fleet of scorpions he put under the command of Captain Campbell with instructions, if need arose, to approach within a handbreadth of the *Marlborough* and blow her out of the water. All hands were piped to witness punishment and, as the hour of eight approached, a boat was seen to leave the flagship's side with the prisoner and provost-marshal. They came alongside of the *Marlborough* and mounted her side. Captain Campbell aligned his boats athwart her bows. Tompions were removed and all made ready. Then came the sound of a booming gun and an ominous yellow flag broke at the masthead. The *Marlborough's* men conducted their messmate to the cathead and fixed the halter round his neck. A moment later the victim was lifted off his feet: lifted—then lowered again! Was it open revolt? Every heart beat more quickly. The little fleet of scorpions wriggled nearer to open fire. But the tension lasted for a minute only. The rope of death had been badly rove. The "Marlboroughs" adjusted it and hauled their victim to the yard-arm with a run.

"Discipline is preserved, sir!" said St. Vincent, replacing his hat.

There were other executions: but never again was the issue in doubt. St. Vincent stood revealed as the majesty of omnipotent law. What the seamen thought of him may be evidenced from the reception of the *London*, arch-mutineer of Spithead. Her captain went to the flagship to report himself, and his barge lay swinging alongside. Heads protruded from the port-holes for a little friendly talk, and one of the "Londons" in the barge called out: "I say, what have you fellows been doing while we've been fighting for your beef and pork?" "If you'll take my advice," said a voice in reply, "you'll say nothing at all about that down here, for by —— if old Jarvie hears ye, he'll have you dingle-dangle from the yard-arm at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

Nelson's *Captain* had been so maimed on St. Valentine's Day that he was forced to part with her. In her place he received the *Theseus*, as wild and lawless a termagant as any sent out from home. But the treatment, which in earlier days had induced the "Albemarles" to volunteer *en bloc* to follow their master where-



soever he went, quickly converted the men of the *Theseus* from blustering bullies to ideal sailormen, brave as lions, affectionate and tractable as children, faithful as dogs and generous as only sailormen can be. Within three weeks from the time that Nelson hoisted his flag the following paper was discovered pinned to the quarter-deck. "Success attend Admiral Nelson! God bless Captain Miller! We thank them for the officers they have placed over us. We are happy and comfortable, and will shed every drop of blood in our veins to support them. And the name of the *Theseus* shall be immortalized as high as the *Captain's*. (Signed) SHIP'S COMPANY."

Meanwhile the blockade of Cadiz continued, and Nelson was placed in command of the inshore squadron. The Spaniards were loath to come out, and at the beginning of July St. Vincent sent mortar-boats to bombard the town and goad its defenders into making some show of resistance. On one occasion the *Thunder* bomb suffered gravely in the firing line and had to be suddenly withdrawn. The Spaniards with a force of gun-boats and launches dashed out to cut off her retreat. Nelson gathered a handful of similar craft and hurried to rescue her. A hot encounter took place and the Admiral's barge found herself opposed by a great Spanish launch manned by thirty big strapping fellows. Nelson had with him all told but twelve besides himself. The fight was desperate. There was no occasion for show of skill. It was a scuffle of thrusting swords and slashing cutlasses: a hand-to-hand encounter. The Britons laboured under an almost impossible handicap, and Nelson with all his talent for battle was hardly built for such an affray. Yet his fiery spirit bore him up and John Sykes served as his shield. Twice the faithful coxswain adroitly parried what must else have proved mortal blows; and when a third came and he could not raise his weapon in time, he thrust himself before his master and received the stroke upon his head. For such spirited gallantry he received the reward reserved for the hero of a fairy tale. Carried back to the ship he easily recovered from a wound that would have killed anyone else; and recovering learned to his joy that the little Admiral had slain eighteen of the Spanish thirty, captured all the rest, and returned in triumph with the captured launch and a couple of bomb-boats as well.

. . . . .

There was always one cheering possibility for a jaded fleet blockading Cadiz, the possibility of snapping up the home-returning ships with treasure from Spanish America. To St. Vincent here came a rumour that the Viceroy of Mexico was on his way eastward with a garnered harvest of six or seven million pounds. The most careful watch was kept: and when the Viceroy came not, Nelson suggested that he had gone to the Canary Islands and proposed to his Chief an expedition to Teneriffe where in days gone by Blake had wrought his great destruction. The idea did not commend itself to St. Vincent so long as the news continued vague, but after a while he heard that a rich galleon from the Philippines had taken refuge in the harbour of Santa Cruz: and he revived Nelson's scheme and sent its author forth to do his worst.

Nelson was never one to raise difficulties, and when St. Vincent put under his charge three men-of-war, three frigates, one fifty and a cutter, he accepted his mission gladly. But it is only fair to his memory to record that the force did not agree with his estimate of what the business required. He had taken Bastia. He had taken Calvi. But in each place he had acted as Brigadier with a landing-party sufficient for his purposes. No soldiers accompanied him now, and Nelson judged them essential. It is true that Blake achieved his purpose with a squadron of ships alone; but then his purpose was different. He had a harbour of ships with which to deal. Nelson, too, would have known how to deal with them. But now there was but the island itself with its castle and forts, its garrison and citadel. "The whale was sent to do the elephant's work."

When Teneriffe was reached on 20th July, Nelson's preconceptions were confirmed. The key to the situation was a fort that overlooked Santa Cruz and commanded it.

Nelson set ashore what force he could muster. But unsupported by artillery the bravest were helpless, and the treacherous winds and adverse currents prevented the approach of the ships. Before second attempt could be made the Spaniards had rallied in defence; and, failing the arrival of a British army to invest the island in form, at this point the attack on Teneriffe might with profit have been abandoned.

Nelson could not and would not face the prospect of returning

with purpose unfulfilled, of confessing that at last he was baffled. He therefore resolved on a surprise attack to be delivered at midnight on the 24th under a veil of thickest darkness. Himself he attended with scrupulous care to the most minute and trifling details. Nothing was overlooked: nothing forgotten. Yet the enterprise was hazardous in the extreme; the chances of success no rosier than those that a forlorn hope commonly presents. Nelson set his affairs in order and prepared for death. "I did not expect," he afterwards confessed, "ever to return alive."

It was eleven o'clock when the expedition set forth. The night was exceedingly dark and the weather wild and blustering. In all there were about 1,000 men; 700 of them in boats, some in a provision vessel captured locally and nearly 200 in the cutter *Fox*. Oars were muffled: and the boats were roped together to prevent a premature dispersal. Guns were carried and sledges to drag them; axes and ropes and scaling-ladders. Silently the assailants groped their way through the pitchy night, listening to the roar of distant breakers and the snore of the grinding beach dragged down by the underwash.

All went well until they were within half a cannon's shot from the mole. It was then about half-past one, and not quite so dark as it had been. Nelson gave the word to cast off the ropes, to run in quickly, give three huzzas and leap ashore. But at this point fortune forsook them. The alarm was raised and a murderous fire opened. The mole itself was held by some 400 or 500 men with 24-pounder guns. Their shot crashed through the boats: and the boats were uncertain of their whereabouts and at the mercy of the angry surf. Captain Bowen's went down like a plummet and with the boat her crew. Bowen struck out and reached the shore, shook himself, and was shot where he stood. Even under such dismaying conditions the courage of the Britons never faltered. They pressed on. They boarded the mole. They routed its defenders. They captured its guns. But the tocsin sounded. The seamen's huzzas were answered by peals from the belfries. Santa Cruz was awake and alive to its peril. The batteries of the citadel commanded the length of the mole. They swept it from end to end with grape and musketry and mowed down Nelson's men in swaths.

Nelson's boat reached the mole in safety. Stepping ashore the Admiral drew his sword, the talisman which he had held when he took the *San Josef*. Even as he drew it he was struck in the right elbow by a grape-shot that splintered his arm most horribly. He had just time to shift his precious weapon into his other hand and grasp it tightly. Then he collapsed. As he fell he was caught in the arms of his step-son, Josiah Nisbet, whom only a few hours before he had been vainly persuading to stay behind. The youngster was only seventeen: yet his coolness in this dire emergency would have done credit to a modern surgeon in a London hospital. He laid Nelson gently in the bottom of the boat and with his hat concealed the wound that bled distressfully. Then as the bullets whistled round him he took from his neck a silk handkerchief and, twisting a tourniquet, bound the arm tightly; while a kindly seaman stripped off his shirt and tore it to pieces for a sling. The boat was beached; but Nisbet with the help of five or six men pushed her off, and they proceeded close under the guns of the forts so as to be safe from further accident.

As they gave way towards the ships, the guns of the Spaniards found the *Fox* and sent the gallant cutter to the bottom. The air was rent with agonized shrieks that pierced through Nelson's trance. He tried to move and recovering from his swoon craved assistance and sat up trying to make out what had happened. They told him and bent to the oar. But he bade them stand by to rescue the drowning and, forgetful of his own pain, he helped the poor fellows to scramble into his boat with his one remaining arm.

The first ship they reached was the *Seahorse*, but Nelson refused to let them stop. They reminded him that his life must depend on immediate attention to his arm. But he would not listen. Captain Fremantle's wife was on board the *Seahorse* and for the sake of his life he would not frighten her.

When they came alongside of the *Theseus* all were anxious to help him. He declined assistance. "Let me alone," he said. "I have yet my legs left and one arm." So they flung him a rope and twisting it round his hand he hauled himself up the side. A strange picture this: for Nelson was no brawny vigorous warrior callous alike to bloodshed and distress. He was small and weak; and the sufferings of others brought tears of compassion to his eyes.

On deck he called to the surgeon to make ready his instruments, for he knew that his right arm must be removed. Then he busied himself with a relief party which he sent to rescue victims from the *Fox*; and this done descended to the cockpit and the terrors of the amputation table. He faced them with stoic heroism and afterwards declared that his acutest pang was caused by the first caress of the cold deliberate steel. Henceforth on board all ships of his the surgeons were given portable stoves that they might remove at least one torture of the many their surgery inflicted.

Meantime strange scenes were being enacted elsewhere. Some of the boats had in the darkness failed to find the head of the mole. They pulled in the direction of the firing and were tumbled in a heap upon the rocks. Their boats were shivered: their ladders lost. Their powder was ruined. They were drenched to the skin. More like drowned rats than an invading army they yet pushed on and reached the public square which Nelson had appointed as a rendezvous. They waited expectantly, but found not a trace of him. Instead came the dawn to betray their misery. In all there were some 340 of them, a forlorn little band caught between the devil and the deep sea. For they could not go back; and they certainly could not go on. The Spaniards had at the lowest estimate 8,000 men, to say nothing of the citadel with its tiers and tiers of guns. But Nelson's second self was there, the gallant Troubridge. With sublime effrontery he sent a flag of truce to the Governor of the town to treat for terms. If the Spaniards, so ran his message, were prepared to supply his force with boats, then of his magnanimity he would promise to do the town of Santa Cruz no farther harm! Captain Samuel Hood bore the message, a cousin of the great Lord Hood with much of the family talent. The Governor was astonished. He pointed out that the British were at his mercy and must surrender in a body. "Not so," argued the ambassador; and in fluent Spanish: "My commandant allows you five minutes. If in that time you agree not to his terms, he will burn your city to the ground and charge with the bayonet."

The Governor made haste to conclude a bargain. Firing ceased and boats in sufficient number were collected beside the

fatal mole. Thither with all the honours of war Troubridge marched his force and embarked. His actual numbers when at last discovered only served to arouse in the Spaniards their natural admiration for heroic deeds. Each man of the 340 received a loaf of bread and a pint of wine. The wounded were cared for in the city hospitals and the Governor allowed his enemies to send ashore for all they required. Not to be outdone in chivalry Nelson offered to convey dispatches to Europe, and bore to Spain the earliest tidings of his own discomfiture.

The casualties were heavy, nearer a third than a quarter of the entire British force : and Nelson's wound was of itself sufficient to brand the affair as a disaster. Yet the repulse at Santa Cruz was in no sense a national calamity. It was not a set-back to any part of the general scheme of operations. It was certainly not a victory for the Spaniards. As a failure it belonged less to England than to Nelson personally. No one realized this better than Nelson himself. He did not excuse himself. He did not say, as he might have said, that the task was from the first impossible. He took upon his own shoulders the entire blame for whatever had gone amiss. In his public dispatch he gave a true account of the proceedings. He suppressed but a single detail. There was not one word about his arm.

To St. Vincent he poured out his heart ; unburdened himself in this pathetic letter :—

*THESEUS, July 27, 1797.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I am become a burden to my friends and useless to my country. . . . When I leave your command, I become dead to the world. I go hence and am no more seen. . . . I hope you will be able to give me a frigate to convey the remains of my carcase to England. God bless you, my dear sir, and

Believe me,

Your most obliged and faithful

HORATIO NELSON.

You will excuse my scrawl considering it is my first attempt.

St. Vincent would not listen to a word of self-disparagement. " 'Tis not in mortals to command success," he quoted ; but his Nelson had more than deserved it. He laughed to scorn the idea that a left-handed Admiral would never again be considered useful, and in making his report to Whitehall vowed the affair lent additional brilliance to the glory of British arms. As the

details of the memorable night became known it was generally agreed that Nelson's cypress crown became him as well as his laurels. Parliament granted him a pension of £1,000, and the Admiralty sent him congratulations. The Duke of Clarence with his own royal hand wrote to condole and compliment. Nelson assured him in reply that though he had lost a limb, not a particle of ardour had escaped through the leak.

Nelson arrived home on 1st September, but he was far too ill to receive or appreciate the adulation that men would have offered him. His operation had proved far from successful. In the murky depths of the cockpit, unlit save by tallow dips, the surgeon, labouring under difficulties had, when he bound the artery, taken up the nerve of the arm and gripped it tightly in the silken ligature. The pain caused was excruciating and never ceased for a moment, day or night. To obtain relief Nelson would willingly have undergone another operation, but there was already so little of the right arm remaining that any further operation was impossible. No comfort could be hoped for until the ligature came away, and the daily attempt of the surgeons to loosen it increased the nervous exhaustion of his suffering frame.

As the autumn waned the attention of all was turned to the North Sea where Duncan still maintained his close blockade. Nelson, always alive for news from the sea, was told one day that a battle was imminent. In his impulsive way he started up and, stretching out his unwounded limb, exclaimed: "I would give this other arm to be with Duncan".

He was lodging in Bond Street at the time, and when the news of Camperdown arrived and the town was illuminated, a surging mob came rolling along the street with noisy celebrations. Nelson had received a dose of laudanum and after a day of constant pain had just dropped off to sleep. The house was wrapped in darkness and the mob, hammering at the door, angrily demanded the reason. They were told that Admiral Nelson lay within suffering from a grievous wound. They apologized and departed silently: nor was the street disturbed again that night.

On 4th December the ligature came away of itself and released him at once from his agony. On the Sunday following the Rector of St. George's, Hanover Square, read out the following at Morning Service: "An officer desires to return thanks to Almighty God for

his perfect recovery from a severe wound and also for many mercies bestowed upon him ”.

With the improvement in his health Nelson was eager at once to be at work again. St. Vincent had already asked that he might return and it was the intention of the Admiralty to provide him with a ship worthy to carry his flag. The *Foudroyant* was named. But Nelson would not wait for her; would not wait for anything. He was mad to be gone and hoisted his flag in the first vessel ready; the *Vanguard*, a seventy-four. As his flag-captain he selected Berry who had backed him up so nobly at St. Vincent. Berry's appointment was approved and Nelson went with him to the royal levee. The King was very gracious and said how sorry he was that the Admiral had lost his right arm. “Yes!” said Nelson, and then with an admiring glance at Berry, “but not my right hand.”

As he had not been in England since the beginning of the war, Nelson took the opportunity while he was in London to put in a demand for a year's pay in respect of the loss of his eye. He appeared in person to support his claim, but failed for the time to establish it, as he had omitted to present a medical certificate vouching for the loss of his sight. As the matter was one of common knowledge Nelson was naturally indignant. But as he visited his doctor a passing thought put him into good temper again. He straightway procured a formal certificate attesting the disappearance of his arm, lest some stupid official should doubt his statement when he put in a claim for that.

THE BATTLE OF THE NILE,  
OR  
THE BATTLE OF ABOUKIR BAY

AUGUST 1, 1798

Honor est a Nilo.

(ANAGRAM ON NELSON'S NAME BY DR. BURNEY.)

Nelson was ready at the end of March, but storms set in and for ten days the *Vanguard* tugged idly at her cables. Nelson suffered severely from sea-sickness, with him a constant trouble when to rough weather was added the bane of idleness. On 9th April he sailed and three weeks later was at Cadiz. St. Vincent



had urgent work and sent him straight off at once. Rumours had come from Toulon of extensive preparations and he desired to know what they meant.

Mischief beyond doubt was afoot, and Bonaparte at the bottom of it. His wonderful Italian campaign by driving Austria out of the war left England the sole antagonist of France; and the Directory, anxious to proceed with their invasion scheme, offered to set him at the head of it. But Bonaparte refused. He was unwilling to base his plans for the future on so shaky a foundation as that afforded by the allied fleet after the upheavals of Jervis and Duncan. He had an alternative plan, rainbow-coloured and ambitious. The Turkish Empire was tottering. Out of it might be carved an oversea dominion greater than Britain's, one that should hold the East in fee and sway the farthest shores of the Levant. For patriotic Frenchmen the prospect glittered with attractions: to Bonaparte the enterprise beckoned as with the finger of destiny. He saw a vision of the future: himself a new Mohammed or Alexander wearing a turban, riding on an elephant, writing a new Koran to fit his needs, and receiving the adoration of prostrate millions. So he urged the rulers of France to strike at Egypt, to strike without delay while yet the English, blinded by the menace nearer home, left the Mediterranean unguarded and unwatched.

The rulers of France were infected with his enthusiasm. The mighty *Sans-culotte* of one hundred and twenty guns was cleansed of Jacobin associations and re-christened *L'Orient* to honour the occasion. Round her gathered fifteen sail of the line, fourteen frigates, and fifty smaller vessels. Four hundred transports assembled to carry the troops, and 36,000 troops made ready to embark. Every road leading to Toulon was filled with lumbering wagons. Every wharf groaned under its mountain of baggage. Cavalry horses, draught horses, and artillery teams waited their turn to go on board: and from the four corners of France there came a motley crowd of astronomers, aeronauts, historians, antiquaries, geometricians, mineralogists, chemists, cartographers and engineers!

To command the ships Bonaparte's choice fell on one whom he had already tried in the Italian campaign, one of the few nobles who had passed through all proscriptions unscathed, François Paul Admiral Comte de Brueys, a brave sailor of ripe experience,

a man of quick judgment, a commander, according to Napoleon, whom no one would disobey twice.

The Directory kept their secret well. Even the staff officers were left in complete ignorance as to where they were going. Nelson kept St. Vincent posted with all that he discovered, the number of ships, their quality, their complements: but the mystery of their destination he was quite unable to fathom. St. Vincent thought the Toulon fleet would sail for the Straits and Brest.

At such a moment in her history England by her endeavours set Europe an example. Though all other Powers submitted to France, she would not stoop to do so. Submit! It was now that she abandoned her defensive attitude: it was now that she retraced the false step made in 1796. Only by re-establishing her ascendancy in Southern Europe could she hope to bring pressure to bear on France; and the activity in Toulon, whatever it might mean, offered occasion for interference. "The appearance of a British squadron in the Mediterranean," wrote the First Lord to St. Vincent, "is a condition on which the fate of Europe may at this moment be stated to depend." He promised the Admiral important reinforcements and bade him take a fleet worthy of the occasion. But Cadiz must not be neglected. St. Vincent might even prefer to stay there himself. "If," concluded the First Lord, "you determine to send a detachment into the Mediterranean, I think it almost unnecessary to suggest to you the propriety of putting it under the command of Sir Horatio Nelson."

St. Vincent had in part anticipated orders. Nelson was already in the Great Sea. But for the time being he had with him only two seventy-fours; the *Orion*, Sir James Saumarez, and the *Alexander*, Captain Ball. These with three frigates and the *Vanguard* comprised his entire force.

The bad luck which attended him at Teneriffe seemed hard to shake off. Just as the French completed their preparations a storm arose and swept him out to sea. In a short time the *Vanguard* was wrecked; her foremast gone, her bowsprit sprung, her main and mizen topmasts by the board. Troubles never come singly. The frigates, seeing her plight, concluded Nelson would fall back on Gibraltar and without orders returned in a body. They gave no notice of their movements. They disappeared, leaving

their Admiral bewildered; for the nature of the crisis before all else demanded the quick transmission of intelligence.

Nelson threw the *Alexander* a towing-rope and bade her drag the *Vanguard* under the lee of some islets off the south-west end of Sardinia. The journey proved difficult and at one stage the heavy swell made it all but impossible. Nelson ordered Captain Ball to cast off and shift for himself. Ball refused. He meant to save the *Vanguard* or go down with her. They struggled on and at last, with perils over, dropped anchor in a tranquil bay. Nelson hastened on board the *Alexander*. He embraced Captain Ball affectionately. "A friend in need is a friend," he said.

All records were surpassed in refitting. The carpenters excelled themselves. A maintop did duty for a foremast. Topgallants replaced the missing spars. The bowsprit was cunningly fished: and in four days the vessel was jury-rigged and off to sea again. On the 21st May they had left Toulon: on the 31st they were back.

But the French had come out and, eluding pursuit, had gone! Who should say where!

Nelson had little enough to guide him. He argued that the enemy would hardly have waited for the absence of a squadron so tiny as his. They were much more likely to have timed their departure for a moment when the wind assisted them. Now the wind that had driven him from his station had been from the north-west. This would hardly help them in any excursion through the Straits to Brest and the Channel. On this shred of evidence he based a conclusion. It was the kingdom of the Two Sicilies that was in danger. Turning his ships round the north of Corsica he set every stitch of canvas that his rickety spars would bear and steered for the Bay of Naples.

Off Elba he was joined by his good angel, Thomas Hardy, in the little brig *Mutine*. Hardy brought the great news. His squadron of observation was to be increased without delay to the dimensions of a battle fleet; and St. Vincent to provide a weapon worthy of the Mediterranean had selected "choice fellows" from his "Chosen Band". With them, ran Hardy's message, Nelson was to seek and find the French, and "TAKE, SINK, BURN, OR DESTROY THEM".

This commission made Nelson a proud man. Without losing

touch with one another he and Ball and Saumarez spread out their arms as widely as they could to catch the coming fleet, and on 7th June the *Vanguard* was greeted by ten seventy-fours and a fifty. It was a happy day, this 7th June: for the men who joined him were the very men whom Nelson would have selected to compose the ideal fleet: his "Band of Brothers" he learned to call them in that affectionate way of his. Collingwood, it is true, was not there. He still remained at St. Vincent's side; disappointment gnawing at his heart. That St. Vincent could not spare him weighed as nothing: that the Admiralty had already marked him out for a flag would have counted for little had he known it. He wanted to sail where Nelson sailed. He asked for nothing else. But if Collingwood was left behind there was Captain Troubridge, son of Anak, in the *Culloden*; and Captain Miller brought the *Theseus* in which he and Nelson had quelled the mutiny and sailed to Tene-riffe. There was gaunt "Ben" Hallowell in the *Swiftsure*, and Samuel Hood the less, Troubridge's messenger at Santa Cruz; and if last, not least, Captain Foley of the *Goliath*, another of those gigantic men who seem by some mysterious law to have gravitated toward Nelson: a splendid creature, wondrously handsome, with a peculiar knack of insinuating his vast bulk into the warmest corner available. He had been as a youth with Keppel at Ushant. He had been with Rodney at the "Moonlight Battle". He had been with Hood at Frigate Bay. He had seen the carnage at the battle of The Saints; done his best to keep the French out of Toulon; and fought as flag-captain of the *Britannia* with Jervis off Cape St. Vincent.

To say truth there is not one commander who should be named before another. From Sir James Saumarez, second in command, to Captain Hardy of the brig *Mutine*, they were all quickly caught by the Nelson spirit. The same influence that in old days made every "Agamemnon" a willing slave now radiated like sunshine through the fleet and created a new fellowship, worthy to compare with Charlemagne's Paladins, or the Knights of the Round Table.

The first part of Nelson's quest was completed in the Bay of Naples. There were no French there and Nelson did not stop. Yet he had business with the Neapolitan Court. Operating so many miles to the eastward of Gibraltar he needed the use of harbours for his ships. He sent Troubridge ashore as ambassa-

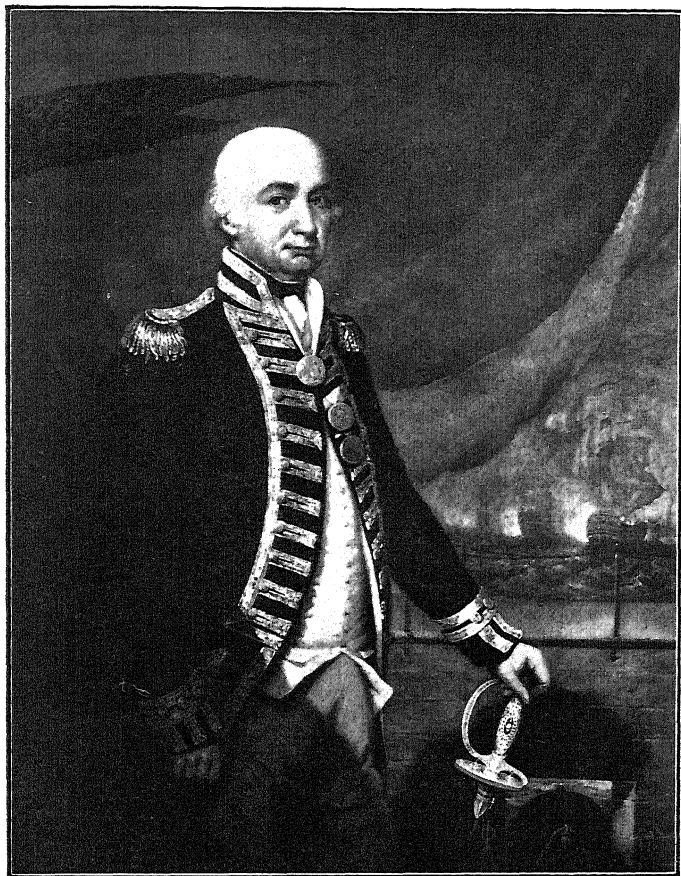
dor. But things had altered since he himself had visited the place in the year that Toulon fell. Italy from the Alps southward was changed by Bonaparte's campaign in Lombardy. North Italy was transformed into the Cis-Alpine Republic and Naples had consented to a pact with the French by which she was forbidden to open her harbours to more anti-Jacobin vessels than four at a time. Troubridge sensibly pointed out that the only deliverance from the yoke of France lay with the British fleet. But with Bonaparte at large in the neighbourhood the Neapolitans, not without cause, clung to neutrality. More valuable than their protestations of goodwill was a hint from Sir William Hamilton. He knew no more than any one else what the French were after, but he suggested a raid on Malta.

This was the right clue at last and with straining masts and swelling sails Nelson ran through the Straits of Messina.

The chase was held up by a serious check off the coast of Sicily. They were in the neighbourhood of Cape Passaro, scene of a great past victory, when news reached them that Malta had already fallen; Malta, that had been bravely held against all odds ever since it was given to the Hospitallers by the Emperor Charles V. The Grand Master had proved unworthy of his predecessors and the famous Knights of St. John had laid down their arms within forty-eight hours of Napoleon's first appearance. This in all conscience was puzzling enough. But there was other food for astonishment. A garrison of 4,000 French had been landed: but the rest of the expeditionary force had vanished like ghosts at daybreak.

If there was one period of Nelson's life at which the favour of the populace deserted him, it was at this. Men said that the Mediterranean command called for ripe experience and proved sagacity. It was folly to have sent so ridiculously young a man. The French were playing with him. He had lost his head: did not know what to do. They cursed him for folly and carelessness. They were haunted with fears that the Corsican would appear unexpectedly in Plymouth Sound.

The position was acknowledged by the highest authorities to be one of profound difficulty: and the French had disappeared beyond the penetrating ken of prophets. Very good! Then, to



CUTHBERT, LORD COLLINGWOOD

Nelson's lifelong friend and most trusted lieutenant. A man of gentle disposition and homely ways: a lover of gardens and poetry. Sent to sea against his will, he became the sternest disciplinarian and the hardest hitter in the fleet.



reveal his genius and exalt his name to the stars, Nelson off Cape Passaro on 22nd June, had but to decide unerringly where the French expedition had gone. They might have returned to Toulon or they might have doubled back to Naples. They might be in the Adriatic or the Gulf of Tuscany. They might have turned west to Carthage or made sail to Constantinople. They might in fact have gone anywhere from one end of the world to the other: but probability with some insistence pointed west to the Straits and beyond.

Nelson went east to Egypt!

The composition of the French expedition had struck him as remarkable. There were 40,000 soldiers; sufficient for an invasion of England. But an army to invade England would not have embarked at Toulon. Some other big country then was to be occupied. But there were only twelve battleships. Clearly the soldiers were not going through fleet-infested seas. If rumour said true, there were philologists and scientists. Some land in the Orient then? What did Saumarez think? Saumarez thought the French would like to turn us out of India. And the road to India lay through Egypt! Promptings such as these had their influence with Nelson. But this also must be said. Never was there warrior since the world began in whose soul burned so steadily the flame of purest patriotism. He was always ready to sacrifice everything to his country's necessity, his ship, his fleet, his wealth, his health, his friends, his life, all he loved best, all he treasured most. He allowed nothing to obscure his vision when he thought of England's need. So was he enabled to see clearer than other men where England's danger lay, and to unmask the designs of England's enemies with a faculty almost superhuman.

We know now that Nelson was perfectly right. We know that when he himself turned east he was treading in the very footsteps of the French. We know that he actually outsailed them, and passed them on the way. That was not his fault. He longed to find them on the great deep. He craved "to try Boney on a wind". Had he done so, Napoleon and his mighty expedition would have been quenched like a Pharaoh's host. But Nelson had been deserted by his frigates. He was obliged to keep his fighting force together. He passed the French and, posting ahead, reached Alexandria before them.



Empty harbours! It is easy to imagine his abject misery. He had staked all on this throw and was wrong! Modesty came to reproach him; whispered that this, like his shipwreck, was heaven's reminder that he was apt to over-rate his poor abilities.

If he had but waited a single day the French would have come like sheep to the slaughter.\* But he would not wait a day. He zigzagged across to the Syrian shore, circled the Levant, flew down the wind when it favoured him, beat in its teeth when foul. A thousand miles he went untired, relentless. The strain was unnerving. Saumarez, a giant beside his chief, confessed himself worn with fatigue. Yet it was not on his shoulders that the responsibility lay. And ever they toiled like Samson with blind eyes. "Was I to die this moment," said Nelson, "want of frigates would be found stamped on my heart."

After three weeks' wandering they were back in Sicilian waters and appeared off Syracuse. The ships were famished. Nelson was in the deepest depths of disappointment. And Syracuse was a neutral port. War vessels never entered it. It was said there was not depth enough. In any case not more than four could enter at a time. There was a prospect of month-long delays.

The story of Syracuse is an old one now: how they entered in spite of difficulties, not four at a time but all together: how they watered the fleet, 250 tons per ship, every drop by manual labour: how they obtained fresh food, and in five days were gone again: all this is well known. Yet men still debate how it was done. Nelson attributed the miracle to Lady Hamilton. Lady Hamilton persuaded the Queen and the Queen gave orders to open her harbour—without the sanction of her Ministers, without the knowledge of the King, in defiance of engagements with France. As the battle of the Nile turned upon the watering at Syracuse, Nelson always spoke of Lady Hamilton as one who shared the glories of the victory, and as one entitled quite as much as himself to the gratitude of England.

Syracuse could supply no news of Napoleon's team: and this confirmed Nelson in his opinion that somewhere in the Levant

\* Nelson left Egypt on 30th June. Napoleon arrived on 1st July, seized Alexandria the following day, and on 21st July defeated the Mamelukes decisively at the Battle of the Pyramids.

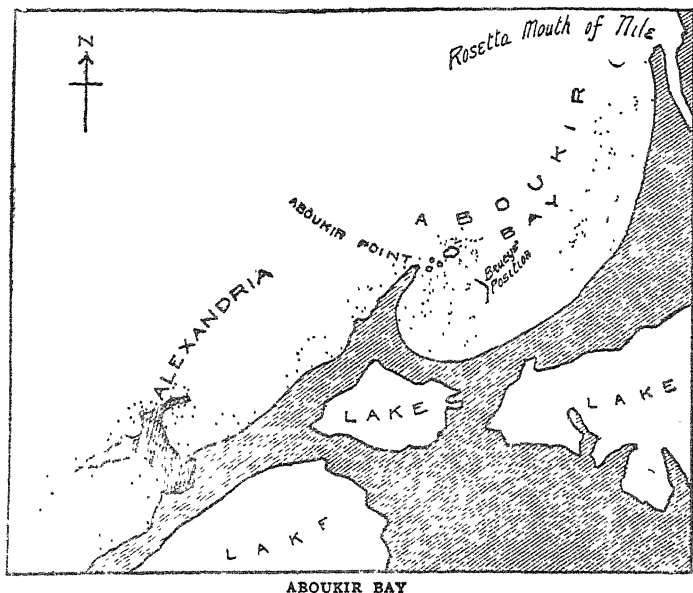
their object lay. Watering done, he plunged again eastward resolute to leave no nook or cranny unexplored.

He must not be pictured during this wearisome search as sitting in his cabin, disconsolate, apart. Hardly a day passed without his summoning all his captains to his side. He took them wholly into his confidence. He told them all that was in his mind. He set before them plans of the enemy's fleet in every conceivable position; in the open sea or in harbour, to windward of him or to leeward. He had schemes to meet every emergency: and with infinite patience, lucidity and tact he explained to every member of his brotherhood exactly what he hoped and meant to do. He did not propound a scheme and leave them to make what they could of it. He did not insist peremptorily upon its punctilious execution. He asked advice, accepted suggestions and thought one hour or half a day well spent, if he could give a better notion of the plan that he had formed; or even clear up a minor point to the satisfaction of a single person. So perfectly at last did all understand that the use of signals promised to become superfluous. The fleet was no longer an aggregation of units; but a perfect body, every limb and member acting in magnetic response to the invisible control of the brain.

The first certain news was obtained off the south coast of Greece. Troubridge brought it. The French he learned had been seen about a month before with sails set towards Egypt. This was good news enough but, as if to give each man a chance of drinking success to the enterprise, Troubridge picked up a vessel with a cargo of wine. He bent a hawser and tugged her astern.

On 1st August the minarets of Alexandria were visible from the *Vanguard*. The harbour seemed to be full of ships and at ten o'clock Nelson detached the *Alexander* and *Swiftsure* to run in and reconnoitre. They sent back word "No sail of the Line!" and as if doomed to perpetual disappointment, the British fleet carried on. But at three o'clock all was changed. The *Goliath* and *Zealous* leading the line had clearly something to report. The *Goliath* fumbled her halyards in her eagerness: the *Zealous* was calmer. "Sixteen sail," she signalled, "in Aboukir Bay!" and each ship that followed gave three British cheers. There were still fifteen miles to be traversed, and Nelson ordered dinner to be served.

Aboukir Bay is situated on the western coast-curve of the delta of the Nile. It is some sixteen miles in width and its sweeping curve is defined on the one side by the Rosetta mouth of the Nile, and on the other by Aboukir Point tip-tilted to the north of east. This cape is effectually prolonged seawards by a line of rocks and reefs that end in what has since been christened Nelson's Island. Already in 1798 the bay was silted up by the sand of a tideless sea, but under the western promontory the shoals



were so arranged as to provide a cosy inner recess, a semicircular sanctuary.

Here Admiral Brueys ensconced himself, and here on the 1st of August he watched his foes draw near. He did not expect them. Nelson's first visit to Alexandria and instantaneous departure he had interpreted as evidence of flight. For some reason or other, he reasoned, the British were intent on avoiding him. He did not even send out frigates to scout and bring him news. At the moment when Nelson's sails rose above the horizon he was

holding a council. He was not making schemes to repel attack, or strengthen his own position. He was seeking advice as to the most picturesque mode of celebrating through the fleet Napoleon's victory at the Pyramids.

The dressing committee quickly resolved itself into a council of war. Speeches were hurried, but after all there was no cause for alarm. The enemy had caught them napping, but in every other respect the odds were on their side. They had a finer fleet than their adversaries.\* Not that they put any dependence on that: bulky French ships had before now yielded to lesser Englishmen. What they did view with complacent satisfaction was the prospect of fighting their inveterate foes without the uneasiness born of inferior seamanship. They were at anchor. Their sails were furled. They needed no hands aloft. Every man could be stationed at the guns. There would be no struggle for position; no tacking, no wearing. With springs on their cables they could move this way and that,† while the British offered a vista of targets with their canvas sheeted home.

But most of all Brueys trusted his position. The friendly shoals guarded his rear and guarded his flanks. He was assailable only by a frontal attack. And if the enemy ventured on a frontal attack they would labour under every disadvantage; the inferiority of their ships, their vulnerability under sail, the labour of navigating them, to say nothing of the batteries he had erected on the island which would sweep them with an enfilading fire.‡

As he completed his arrangements with a flurried haste pardonable under the circumstances, Nelson arose from the dinner-table with words of breezy confidence. He did not then know the

\* The English had thirteen seventy-fours and a fifty; the French eight seventy-fours, three eighties, and *L'Orient* (120).

† SPRING, a hawser led from aft and made fast to the cable so as to turn the ship in any direction when she is at anchor.

‡ On two occasions during the American War English fleets were challenged to fight from positions similar to that which Brueys held. In the Grand Cul-de-Sac of St. Lucia, Barrington, with an insignificant force, had beaten off the impetuous dare-devil D'Estaing with annoying facility, and in Frigate Bay, St. Kitts, the best efforts of De Grasse had only proved the impossibility of ousting an anchored fleet. Brueys' line on the present occasion was bent into a very obtuse angle with the *Orient* at the apex, which seems to show that he was consciously imitating Hood's disposition in Frigate Bay.

actual numbers of the French.\* But he cared not how many they were. Whatever their numbers he intended to outnumber them! He intended to attack their van, and match two British ships with every French. More than one great sailor had attempted before to concentrate the whole of his force on a part of the enemy's: and in more than one battle in days gone by ships had doubled or tried to double. But even by Rodney the manoeuvre had never been successfully executed—without some lucky unforeseen accompaniment. On what then did Nelson rely to accomplish what had never before been done? He brought the breeze along with him from a little to the west of north, and as the enemy's ships were drawn up from north to south he could plant his ships wherever he chose on either side of their line. He could not have done so had they been in motion. But his chief hope of success in the coming fray was based upon that very property which the Frenchmen valued most—their immobility. The part attacked could not run away, nor the part unmolested move to their relief. Their election to fight at anchor was to prove their own undoing.

But Brueys thought his flank and rear impregnable, girt about as they were with shoals. According to the text-books they were impregnable. But what of the quicksands of the Kentish Knock? What of the reefs of Quiberon? Did these deliver De With or Conflans out of the hands of the British? Blake took the wind into his confidence and coaxed it to blow him off the bank. Hawke "took the foe for pilot and the cannon's glare for light". And Nelson had taught his captains that "Where there is room for a Frenchman to swing, there is room for a Briton to anchor". By that he meant that the interval between an enemy's ship and the shoal was not an undiscoverable quantity, but a circle whose radius was equal to the distance between bowsprit and anchor-buoy; and that within its limits any ship of his could pass or take up her position with safety.

Nelson issued most careful arrangements for anchoring his ships as soon as they reached a position agreeable to their purpose. They were to anchor not as usual by the bow, but by the stern.

\* The *Zealous* reported "Sixteen sail". Seventeen was the actual number, but four of these were frigates moored between the warships and the land.

For in so doing they would be pulled up sharp and economize their sea-room : they would be prevented from swinging round to the wind in the face of a raking fire : and by the simple expedient of shortening or paying out cable they could alter their position on the field of battle as the exigencies of the moment demanded.

Vainly then did Brueys trust that the circumstances of the coming fight would neutralize the British talent for seamanlike conduct.

There was, however, one safeguard for the French not yet enumerated. The hour was late. The waning summer afternoon was drawing to a close. Soon would come sunset and with it instant darkness, for there is but short twilight in the latitude of Alexandria. The French, anchored at safe distances from one another, had nothing to fear. It was otherwise with the English.

But Nelson was quite prepared to fight in the dark. The peril was great : but he welcomed it. Darkness, he laughingly argued, would handicap both sides and therefore serve as a positive advantage to the better of the two. He took a simple precaution. He ordered in each ship a cross-bar to be slung with four ship's lanterns horizontally : and this he directed to be hoisted to the mizen-peak so that Britons might recognize their fellows. And in every vessel too, while some sanded the decks, others at his orders lighted lanterns and lashed them firmly to the side of the ship, one over every gun.

Thus they went down to fight the French.

It was about half-past six that the battle began. The first shot was fired by Brueys' island batteries. The English bore down before the wind in death-like silence. Hands in the channels were heaving the lead and hands up aloft furling sail. Still they came on and not a gun spoke. In vain had Brueys placed in the centre of the line the hundred guns of the *Orient* and an eighty on either side. It was not on them that the blow was to fall. Captain Foley in the *Goliath* led the British line. His glance was bent on the *Guerrier*, the tip of the French left wing. The *Guerrier* blazed away, but he answered not. He was searching through his glass for the anchor-buoy. He found it and kept his rudder steady. He curved round the head of the French line with the assured touch of an old hand who had ten times been over the course. The French were amazed ; but not as impressed

as they would have been had they known that the British were without a single chart. They fully believed that their adversaries had on board accredited pilots, and they marvelled whence the pilots came.

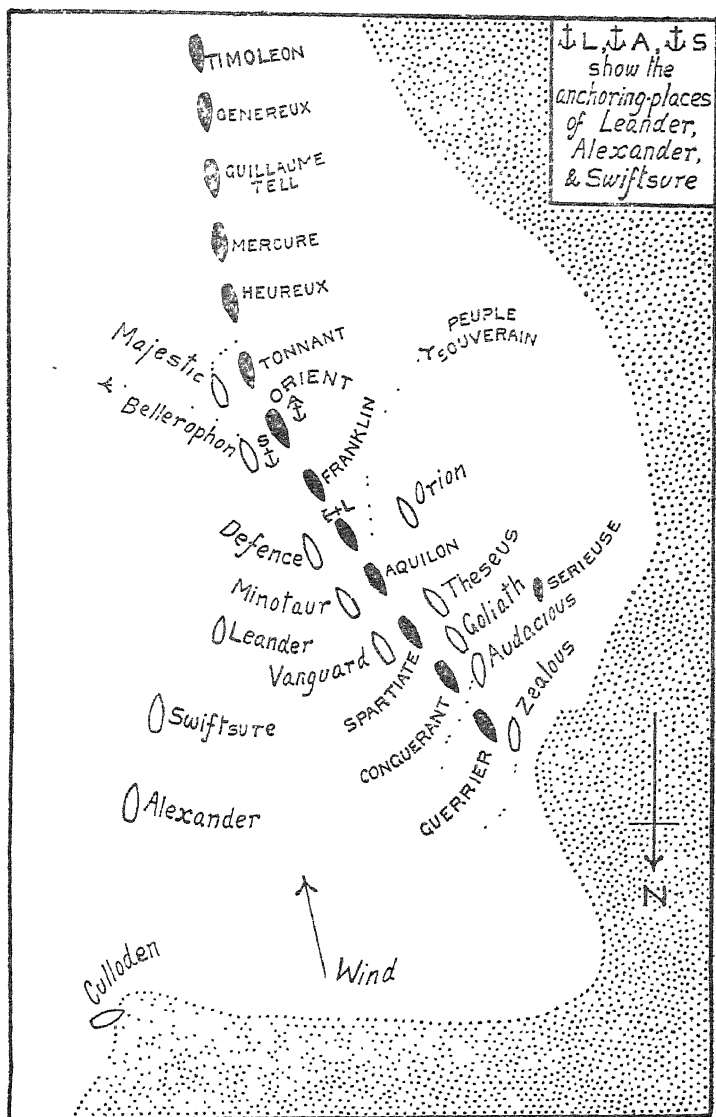
Foley curved round the head of the French line, following Nelson's instructions to the letter. And as he came athwart-hawse of the *Guerrier* he let forth in one thunderous burst all the pent-up energies of the *Goliath*. He raked the *Guerrier* from stem to stern, so that the men dropped beside their guns and the stout planks shivered into splinters. Then the *Goliath* put up her helm and passing on the larboard side of her antagonist, dropped anchor by the stern.

As she did so the sun sank into the sea, lighting up the English sails with a parting caress of gold.

All the first five sail of the British line passed inside the French formation. There was no running aground; no mishap of any kind. The *Guerrier*, groaning from the *Goliath's* wounds, groaned again as the *Zealous* raked her. Captain Hood brought up in five fathoms only, grazing the bottom with his keel. Satisfied with this position he lay on the port bow of the *Guerrier* and blew a hole in her side big enough for "a coach and four to be driven through". Then, as if to prove that British marksmen needed no sail-targets to help their aim, he rolled the foremast out of her into the darkening sea. All this in five minutes; so that lusty cheers arose from the Britons in his wake.

Among these Captain Miller of the *Theseus* noted that the elevation of the *Guerrier's* guns as she aimed at his predecessors was inclined too high. He put his helm over a trifle more and, glutting his guns, ran under the arch of her fire. At point-blank range he hit out with double-shotted, treble-shotted broadside. Down came mizen, and down came main. What but an hour before had been a proud-looking vessel of France was now a sheer hulk with gaping sides, a pitiful derelict.

It is an oft-quoted remark that at the battle of the Nile every one of Nelson's ships found means to distinguish herself. The *Audacious* gained an early opportunity. She was one of the five destined to engage on the side of the shoals. But she found her own way there: a new and original way. She cut between the *Guerrier* and the next French ship, the *Conquerant*. She raked



THE BATTLE OF THE NILE  
 August 1, 1798



the stricken *Guerrier* from stern to bow, and the *Conquérant* from bow to stern. Dropping anchor she slung round with nose to the wind and lay on the port bow of the *Conquérant*. As Foley had already planted himself on that same ship's miserable quarter, the *Conquérant*, like the *Guerrier*, found the odds too heavy for her.

Captain Miller meanwhile had carried the *Theseus* a step farther and dropped anchor alongside of the *Spartiate*. The first three ships of the French array were thus matched with four opponents. Themselves brave ships they were ready to fight as brave ships should: but they were terribly handicapped, for they had been led by Admiral Brueys to believe that the fighting would be with their starboard batteries and their starboard batteries alone. To larboard, their guns were not even unlimbered. Many were hampered with furniture and cumbered with tackle and useless gear. No time this to drag the port-lids up when the British broadsides battered from without.

And now the four Britons within the shoals were joined by one of the hardest hitters that ever sailed the seas, Captain Sir James Saumarez in the *Orion*. He slipped through the strait gate under cover of the *Zealous* and her friends: and received his first blow from the *Sérieuse*, a pugnacious little frigate. Frigates in the hour of battle were drawn up on the disengaged side of their line, where they lay in comparative safety. Tradition debarred them from active operations, and so far as the British were concerned Nelson's two-sided attack on this occasion made no change in the ordinary rule. But the *Sérieuse* was over-bold. She fired a round at the *Goliath* who took not the smallest notice: and when the *Orion* swung past, she presumptuously matched herself with a second giant. Saumarez for a while would not reply. But as the *Sérieuse* continued her attentions, he left his course and porting his helm, went shoalwards to pay her a visit.

He waited till he was close alongside and then his broadside blared with a crashing smash as if a hundred doors had been shattered by a hundred crowbars. The *Sérieuse*, filling at once, settled down by the head.

Having thus read his lesson to meddlers Sir James returned to his proper sphere. But his detour had taken him a little too far, and when he reached the battleship belt he anchored not alongside of the fourth French ship, but the fifth, the *Peuple Souverain*.

Between his ship and Captain Miller's lay the *Aquilon*—unmarked.

Five British sail were now engaged all on the inner side of the French. Nelson himself came next. He had hoisted six flags in the *Vanguard*, so that if by chance five were shot away it might not be thought he had surrendered; and at his masthead flew his favourite signal, “Engage the enemy more closely!”

Nelson laid his ship on Brueys' outer seaward side: the first to do so. He intended himself to lead the way into the thick of the enemy's fire; and he calculated that of his fourteen ships the half were now engaged; for the *Leander* (fifty) hardly counted as a ship, and the *Alexander* and the *Swiftsure*, whom he had sent to look into Alexandria, were miles astern. No one could tell the hour of their arrival.

His estimate unfortunately had been rendered still more exact by a calamity. Troubridge, the light of his eye, had run aground in the *Culloden*. It will be remembered that when the enemy were discovered he was towing a cargo of wine. He cast off at once and made all sail, but he had been thrown behind and when the *Goliath* opened fire was not yet round Aboukir Point. Darkness was upon the sea to render his task more difficult, and though he sounded a careful way the water shoaled at the point with startling suddenness and left him stranded. To one so much in love with fighting this was a cruel blow. Captain Hardy in his little brig wrestled with cables and ropes, a mouse helping a lion. But all in vain. Nothing could be done. Troubridge wondered what Nelson would think of him: and sorrowfully recalled the happier day when they drubbed the don together at St. Vincent.

Not blame but pity was what Nelson felt. It was Captain Troubridge's misfortune, he afterwards wrote, to run aground “while his more fortunate companions were in the full tide of happiness”.

In the full tide of happiness! When Nelson reached the firing-line victory had already begun to declare itself. According to his original scheme his own place would have been on the starboard quarter of the *Guerrier*. But the *Guerrier* had little fight left in her: and the *Conquérant* was no better off. There was no use in wasting shot on them. So he carried on to the *Spar-*

*tiate* and anchored alongside. In doing so he put the wretched ship between two fires, for Miller from the side of the shoals already bombarded her. But next to the *Spartiate* came the *Aquilon*, and the *Aquilon* was unmarked. Seeing a grand opportunity she slewed herself round by the springs on her cable until she lay under the *Vanguard's* very bows. From this commanding position she raked the British flagship with galling effect. The forecastle men were mown down and, seeing the utter helplessness of their position, looked pathetically at the commander-in-chief as if to ask whether this sacrifice were according to his will. He could not help them. No one could help them. Captain Berry grew anxious, and at last sought permission to change the position of the ship. But Nelson would not move. "No, no!" he said. "It is all right. Louis will soon be here!" Louis was captain of the *Minotaur*, Nelson's second astern.

It was pitch dark now, and though Louis might see the four lanterns at the *Vanguard's* mizen peak he could not tell what she suffered on her decks. But not in vain did Nelson trust him. Dropping anchor he so pounded the *Aquilon* that first he drew her fire and then distracted her entire attention from the *Vanguard* to himself. And somewhat about the same time Miller divined the peril of his chief and, paying out cable, changed his place so that he too could help to quell the furious ardour of the Frenchman. Thus *Theseus* and *Minotaur* fought in company to shield the Admiral!

It is not exactly known at what hour Nelson was wounded. He was standing near the main-hatch at the time and giving his whole mind to the direction of the fight. Suddenly he was struck by a piece of langridge. The missile slashed his forehead like a scalping knife and a large flap of flesh fell over his one good eye blinding him utterly. Nelson fell and falling was caught in Berry's arms. The flow of blood was so great and the pain so excruciating that he made sure he must be dying and whispered into Berry's ear his last wishes.

Then they bore him to the cockpit and the surgeon at once left what he was doing and ran to his aid. But Nelson would not suffer any tampering with custom. "No!" he said, "I will take my turn with my brave fellows." So he waited patiently: but he kept on asking that Captain Louis might be summoned, for Cap-

tain Louis, he said, had saved the *Vanguard* and he must thank him before he died. The meeting of the two drew tears from all.

The surgeon, on examining the injury, declared that he would beyond all doubt recover. The wound, he declared, was not even dangerous. Nelson tried to believe him, but his agony was very great. He allowed himself to be carried to the biscuit-room,\* and there for a time he lay more dead than alive. But soon his spirit began to re-assert itself and he sent for his secretary that he might dictate dispatches. The secretary was unnerved by the distressing condition of his master, and found it quite impossible to proceed. Nelson permitted him to go, and, though he could barely see at all, traced the letters with his slow left hand; "Almighty God," he began to write, "has blessed his Majesty's arms . . ."

There still needed three more ships on the outer side to balance those on the inner. Of these the *Defence* was the first to arrive. She passed on the disengaged side of the *Vanguard* and dropped anchor abreast of the *Peuple Souverain*. The *Peuple Souverain* had already rather more than she cared about, for within her guard was the *Orion* deluging her decks with blood. The arrival of the *Defence* made her eventual surrender as positive a certainty as that of the *Guerrier*, *Conquérant*, *Spartiate*, and *Aquilon*.

Astern of the *Defence* came the *Bellerophon* and astern of the *Bellerophon* the *Majestic*. These two ships were destined to suffer a harder fate than their friends: for, wherever they went, they were compelled to fight unaided and alone. They had no "double" on the inner side of the French as had the *Vanguard*, *Minotaur*, and *Defence*. The resistance they met and their punishment serve better than words to show how Brueys intended to fight the English if only they had joined issue with him in the way he himself intended.

It will simplify matters to take first the case of the *Majestic*. Following the lights of the *Bellerophon* she kept to seaward when the *Bellerophon* drew up: and then dropped anchor as she saw through the gloom the dark outline of the *Tonnant*, one of Brueys' seconds. There was only time for a broadside. The *Majestic's* anchor would not hold. She drifted on and in an evil hour ran

\* A tin-lined cavity in the hold.

full tilt into the side of the *Heureux*. Her wicked bowsprit hooked itself into the Frenchman's rigging which held her end on in the jaws of death. She was raked with hideous effect and her Captain went down among the rest, killed by a musket-ball.\* In time, however, she burst her way free and, swinging round, took up a new position bow to bow on the side of the shoals. Here she was able to fight on something like equality.

But to return to the *Bellerophon*. It was quite dark when she reached the scene of action: and maybe it was quite by accident that instead of dropping anchor by the *Franklin* she laid herself alongside of the *Orient*. It may have been: and it may have been part of her invincible dogged fighting quality. It was really quite absurd to suppose that she could match herself with Brueys' flag. The metal thrown from the *Orient's* lower-deck by itself outweighed her broadside. If he had been able, Captain Darby would have laid himself on the mighty Frenchman's bows. But like the *Majestic's* his anchor would not hold and he brought up beam to beam nearly touching. This was just what Brueys had prayed for. He gave the *Bellerophon* a broadside; paused a second; then gave her another. Eight guns on board the *Bellerophon* were dismounted.

Dismounted! They were broken in pieces: their muzzles shattered like earthenware crocks. Captain Darby was carried unconscious below. One lieutenant was killed; two wounded; the master was wounded and the bos'n and the Captain of Marines. The "Ruffians" were stung with the very madness of heroism. They fought like demons. The first lieutenant took command. He was wounded: would not leave his place: bound up his wound and remained. Then his leg was torn off, and as he was carried below a grape shot passed through his lungs and killed him and the man who carried him. The second lieutenant was summoned and conducted the fight. As he reached the deck the mizen went and the *Bellerophon* reeled at the loss. Ten minutes

\* One of the first tasks Nelson set himself on his return home was to visit the relatives of Captain Westcott. They were simple folk living at Honiton. Nelson asked them to dine with him at the village inn. After dinner he asked the Captain's mother if she had received the medal to which her son was entitled. When she answered him no, he took his own from his breast and presented it to her; hoping she would not think less of it because he had worn it himself.

later without warning the main came down, killing the lieutenant in charge and littering the deck with wreckage. Then the third lieutenant directed the fight, for still the fight went on. The enemy hurled incendiary bombs and the *Bellerophon* caught fire: but they quenched the flames. One third of the company were killed or wounded and still the "Billy Ruff'ns" went on fighting.\* They fought as long as men could fight: and when at last they could fight no more, they cut their cable and setting their spritsail departed. As they did so the foremast went by the board: and the *Bellerophon* bowed her head as if ashamed to go when there was need to stay. But never was nobler fight conducted in the face of odds. The praise of the plucky ship rang through the fleet; and in after days they learned to say "No man can be a coward on board the *Bellerophon*".

Such sterling gallantry is never wasted. The *Bellerophon's* defence played an important part in the consummation of the victory; for it kept the French Commander-in-Chief fully employed at a crucial moment. At a crucial moment it held him engaged while Nelson's reserve hastened up to destroy him.

Far away in the rear, Troubridge, eager to do what he could, played the part of recruiting sergeant or officer in command at the base. Dispensing with the proffered help of the *Leander* he sent the little fifty to represent himself. The *Leander* arrived at a critical moment. For an hour and a half the *Peuple Souverain* had fought the *Defence* and *Orion*. They had all but crushed the resistance out of her when Saumarez with a fortunate shot cut her cable as with a knife. The *Peuple Souverain* drifted helplessly towards the shallows and left behind her a yawning gap in the very midst of the line. Was the little *Leander* eyed like a cat? Could she see this gap through the dark? She certainly pushed her way straight into it; and anchoring herself at right angles to the French, raked them up and raked them down; raked them forwards and raked them backwards; raked them this way and raked them that. So weak herself that any French ship could have crushed her under heel, she yet wrought all the damage of which she was capable without suffering a scratch, like a gadfly perched on a horse's back just out of reach of his tail.

\* The *Bellerophon's* casualties amounted to twenty-five per cent of the total English loss.

If Troubridge could not be present himself he had found a very efficient substitute! And with timely beacons he saved Captain Ball and Captain Hallowell from sharing his unhappy fate. He guided them safely round the shoal; whipped them up and hurried them on.

The first vessel that Hallowell found among the shadows was a ship in actual movement. He strained his eyes through his night-glasses to see what he could make of her. The seamen all stood by their guns waiting his word to fire. But Hallowell hesitated. He could not quite make the vessel out. She seemed like a Frenchman; she had no four lights at the mizen peak and she was without doubt gravely wounded. Yet he was not sure. So he seized up his trumpet, and at the top of his voice bellowed out "What ship is that?" And faintly through the rumbling medley of sounds came the answer "*Bellerophon!*" Going out of action disabled!"

This was enough for Hallowell and he plunged into the fray to take the *Bellerophon's* place. With precise skill he laid the *Swiftsure* on the starboard bow of the *Orient* and Captain Ball in the *Alexander* thrust his way through the French and laid himself on her larboard quarter. They had arrived in the very nick of time.

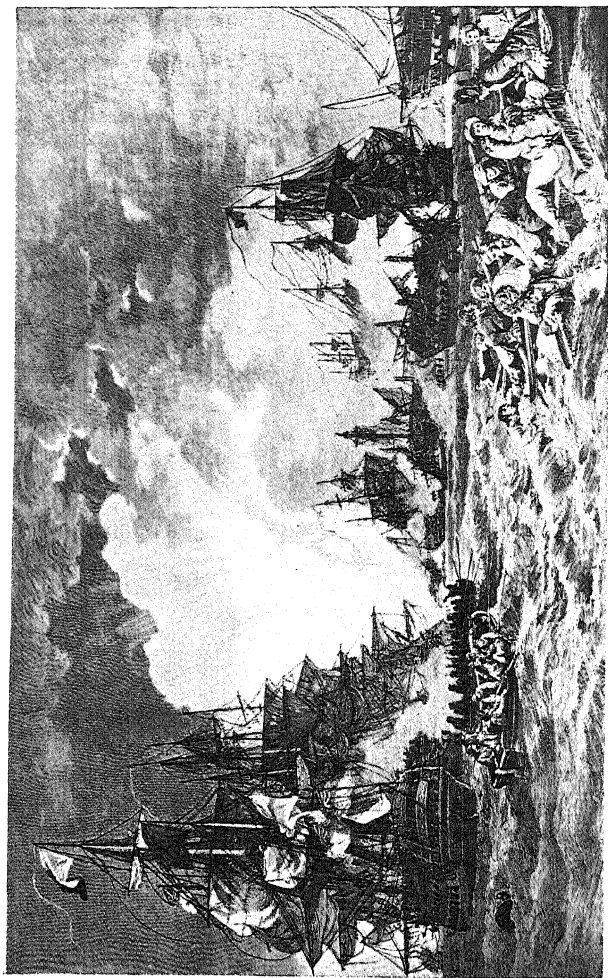
Though she had now an enemy on either side the *Orient* was not outmatched; for a first-rate of her noble proportions was the equal of any two seventy-fours afloat. And Brueys fought like a tiger. Three times he was struck on that fatal night. The first time he was wounded in the head. But he cared not. Then a musket-bullet shattered his hand; and he bound it together with his handkerchief, threw back his head; brushed the tears from his eyes, the blood from his face. The third wound was ghastliest of all. He was almost cut in two. It was pitiful that a man should be so hurt and should not die. They would have done anything for him: and raised him tenderly. But he had still his voice. "Let me be!" he said. "A French Admiral dies upon his quarter-deck."

Captain Casabianca,\* like Napoleon a Corsican in the service

\* His son, Mrs. Hemans's hero, was also serving on board. The famous poem, though untrustworthy in its details, presents a figure which may deservedly stand as typical of the steadfast heroism common to all defenders of the *Orient*.







THE BATTLE OF THE NILE

The blowing up of the *Orient* reveals for a minute the whole scene. On the left is the English outer line, and nearest the spectator is the *Vanguard*. At the main she flies the signal, "Engage the enemy more closely!" At the mizzen she carries Nelson's blue flag, and at the mizzen peak the four distinguishing lanterns. A boat leaves her to take possession of a prize. The French ships, little more than mastless hulks, lie in the centre of the picture, and beyond them are the ships of the British inner line.

of France, took command on the death of Brueys. The task of fighting the *Swiftsure* and *Alexander* was of itself sufficient. And now came a new enemy. The *Orient* caught fire. How it happened no one can say. There is a story that the flagship was being painted when the battle began and that the paint pots had been stowed upon the poop. But as a matter of fact it was common enough for a ship to catch fire. Why was not the fire put out? It was grim "Ben" Hallowell's doing. He isolated his enemy's poop with a ring of shot and shell. The Frenchmen could not approach it; or approaching were killed at once. The flames leapt up; and he guarded them like the heartless spirit of strife. The conflagration spread downward deck by deck. And still the men of the *Orient* stood by and manned their guns.

At ten, the flames reached the powder magazine: and the *Orient* blew up. The boom of the guns, the rattle of musketry, the shrieks of the victims, the groans of the dying, all were drowned in the volcanic burst, the elemental roar: and the dreadful blackness for the time was gone, swallowed up in the radiance of the blood-red light. Men looked with wonder in each other's faces; saw around them the havoc that the night had wrought, saw the decks with the dark stains upon them, saw ship beyond ship upon the battlefield, saw the land in the distance and the watching Arab throngs, and saw far off the wreckage dance on the heaving bosom of the bay. For minutes as it seemed all was visible: and then, as if Nature shuddered, the palpable darkness came down again and all was still, save where the ruddy spars fell to be quenched like torches, or a shower of sparks dropped hissing in the glassy surface of the sea.

All was still. The magnitude of the calamity put an instant period to the strife. Men did not then know as now they know that Napoleon's ill-gotten gains had perished with the ship: the spoils of Malta; £600,000, three tons of plate, the silver gates of the cathedral, the life-sized statues of the twelve apostles made of silver within and without. But they did know that the finest ship in the navy of France had been in an instant destroyed, and they did know that in the same instant of time 500 men, faithful and true, had been called to the great account. And so for a spell the battle was hushed while both sides honoured the dead.

As Captain Berry and officers watched from the *Vanguard's*

quarter-deck they were conscious of a presence among them, and turning beheld Nelson. In spite of his semi-blindness he had scrambled alone from the depths of the hold in time to witness the final catastrophe. He gave instant orders to lower away the boats and so rescued seventy men. It was with him a lasting regret that he could not rescue more.

Brueys' *Franklin* renewed the fight. She was an eighty-gun ship and next ahead of the *Orient*. She was the only ship between Brueys' flag and the batteries on Aboukir Isle that had so far found no combatants. She was the only ship between Brueys' flag and Aboukir Isle that had not by now surrendered. The *Defence*, *Orion* and *Swiftsure* pounced upon her: and the *Leander* raked her without pity.

The British were now at liberty to move along and deal with the French rear as efficaciously as they had dealt with the van. The reader may ask why the rear, instead of weighing anchor, stood like stupid sheep awaiting their doom. Had the battle been fought by daylight they would doubtless have made some effort, though the wind, it must be remembered, was blowing slap in their teeth and they had with suicidal foresight furled their sails. But as it was, the night covered all; and even when the *Orient* blew up they hardly realized the magnitude of the disaster that had overtaken their companions.

When the *Franklin* surrendered, the *Tonnant*, Brueys' second astern, constituted herself the protagonist of a new struggle, fighting with desperate gallantry. Dupetit Thouars, her captain, had his right arm maimed and his left arm mangled. Finally one of his legs was shattered. But he would not move or go below. He ordered a tub of bran to be brought, had himself placed in it; and with gorgeous fortitude conducted the fight while he slowly bled to death. One of his last commands was to nail the *Tonnant's* colours to the mast, and with his dying breath he exhorted his men never to surrender to the foe.

But no human pluck, no oaken planks, no broadsides could save the ships of France from the overwhelming force which Nelson's skill opposed to them.

About three o'clock in the morning the battle thunder suddenly lulled. It was not that the fight was over, not that the work was

complete. But the English seamen were exhausted. For nine hours of the night they had been toiling and struggling without refreshment, without relief. Now they dropped beside their guns, worn out. The noise of the firing could not keep them awake. They were surfeited with excitement.

When morning dawned clear there were but three ships left of the gallant fleet that had brought Bonaparte to Egypt, the *Guillaume Tell*, the *Généreux* and the *Timoleon*. Hope died within them and they turned to fly. The *Timoleon* was rather too near the shoals. She ran aground, and was by her own company set afire. The other two showed a clean pair of heels. They were the only ships of the battle-line that escaped to tell the tale.

The news was received with frantic rapture in London and Moscow, Vienna and Naples, Calcutta and Constantinople. People's breath was taken away, and little wonder. The achievement was the completest ever wrought by the British Navy. Eighty-five per cent of the enemy's force taken, burnt, or destroyed! Britain might well rejoice. The victory restored to her the absolute sovereignty of the Mediterranean from Genoa to Tunis, from Gibraltar to Alexandretta.

Up till now France had prevailed against Europe. By the Nile her work was all undone. The dying embers of the continental struggle leapt into flames again. Austria and Russia made haste to form with Nelson's countrymen the "Second Coalition". Up till now all military reputation had paled before the star of Bonaparte. By the Nile the arch-strategist was cut off from his base. The noise of his deeds had filled the world. Now was he left with the silent Sphinx. India and Persia had beckoned to him. Now was his destiny spoiled. He might creep back to Europe alone: but the legions of the Orient were lost.

The Victory of the Nile raised Nelson to the highest pinnacle of human fame. Though but a young man and a junior flag-officer he was now regarded in England as the greatest seaman of his day, and in Europe as the greatest Englishman. Every one wanted to learn from his own lips how he had won a victory so miraculous and unprecedented: and he himself was eager to tell,

"I had the happiness," he modestly wrote, "to command a band of brothers."

Innumerable rewards and marks of esteem flowed in upon him. Lord Howe, Lord Hood, and Lord St. Vincent wrote him letters of congratulation. The "Band of Brothers" gave their leader a magnificent sword. The City of London voted £200 to buy him another. The East India Company made him a generous donation of £10,000. The Parliament of Great Britain granted him a pension of £2,000 a year. The Czar sent him a gold box inlaid with precious stones. The King of Sardinia conferred upon him the order of San Joachim. The King of Naples made him a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of San Ferdinand and presented him with a diamond-hilted sword. Most lavish of all were the gifts of the Sultan: the Order of the Crescent; a sable pelisse; a musket of silver and ivory; a gold-hilted blade in a sheath of gold; and the Chelengk, or Plume of Triumph, a gorgeous aigrette of 300 diamonds with central rose and thirteen sprays. Four of its gems alone were valued at £5,000: and with it came an autograph letter from the Sublime Porte informing Nelson that never before had the jewel been conferred on any but a Mussulman.

The King of England gave Nelson an honourable augmentation of his arms with the motto "Palmarum qui meruit ferat". He gave him also permission to wear the Chelengk in his hat, and created him Baron Nelson of the Nile.\*

A medal was struck in gold for Admirals and Captains, in silver for lieutenants, in bronze for the rest. On one side Hope leans on a medallion of Nelson; on the other the British attack the foe while the astonished sun sinks for once in the east. Some objection was raised to conferring it on Troubridge, but Nelson, ever loyal to his friends, insisted. "Captain Troubridge ASHORE," he said, "is superior to captains AFLOAT."

Berry was sent home with dispatches, and received a knighthood from the King: his place in the *Vanguard* was filled by Captain Hardy.

\* Fearing that Nelson might be spoiled by the lavish presents he received, Captain "Ben" Hallowell sent him a coffin made from the timbers of the *Orient*. For once his irony went astray, for Nelson received the gift with humility and kept it in his cabin as a *memento mori*.

Two years \* elapsed between the battle of the Nile and Nelson's return to England. These years were busy, but afforded little opportunity for martial exploits or increase of fame. Nelson's task was to garner the aftermath of his victory. He had to prevent the return of the French from Egypt. He had to blockade and capture Malta, the strategic base which they had taken from the Knights Hospitallers. And the kingdom of Naples daily endeavoured to fasten the burden of its cares upon his back.

Napoleon's campaign in Lombardy had carried the French sphere of influence in Italy to the Neapolitan borders. It threw a shadow over Naples itself. Nelson's victory seemed to lift the shadow and the monarchs took heart of grace and attempted by force to drive the French from the peninsula. But their troops proved worthless in the field and ran away. "They had not much honour to lose," said Nelson, "but they lost every scrap they had."

The position of affairs was reversed. Legions of *sans-culottes* poured across the frontier of Naples. Trees of liberty were planted, and under their shade outrages were committed that would have brought a blush to the face of slavery. The time-honoured kingdom was converted into the Parthenopeian, or as Nelson (with a truer sense of humour) termed it, the *Vesuvian Republic*: and the wretched King and Queen were threatened with the same fate that had overtaken Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Flight was the only remedy. That it did not end in disaster like the flight to Varennes was due to Nelson. He rescued the royal family, their household, their friends and their possessions. The true narrative reads like a page from a romance; the art treasures conveyed to the ships under the guise of wine-butts, the principal actors in the tragi-comedy attending a ball an hour before the escape; masks and dominoes, and a subterranean passage. In the multitudinous details of this exciting adventure Nelson was aided at every turn by Lady Hamilton, whose resourcefulness was only equalled by her pluck. When all were embarked, the ships stood across to Sicily; but they were caught by a howling tempest, the worst, Nelson said, in his remembrance. The closely-reefed topsails were blown out of the bolt-ropes. It seemed as if the royal family had escaped the perils of the land only to perish in the waters. The entire Court were prostrate with sea-sickness, and one of the

\* September, 1798–July, 1800.

royal children died in the arms of Lady Hamilton. She alone made light of the roaring weather and acted as nurse to the whole party. Nelson brought his charges at last to Palermo.

The grateful monarchs reposed in him a childlike trust, and felt certain that he would in time re-establish their throne. Their faith was justified. Nelson could not of himself expel the French. But he bided his time until some part of their armies were withdrawn, and then he landed a select little band under Troubridge and, as he had done in Corsica, took their strongholds one by one.

During the exercise of his duty as High Commissioner for King Ferdinand he hanged a double-dyed traitorous villain called Caracciolo and this with a promptitude that Jarvie might have envied. Many writers have blamed him; partly from disappointment, because as a rule he was gentle and kind; partly from sentiment, because Caracciolo was a Prince and an Admiral; partly on the false supposition that Caracciolo was also an old man. The story of the grey hairs is a fable. Caracciolo was forty-seven. As for ranks and titles they could but add to his criminality when he served against the monarchs who ennobled him. The fact that Nelson was on all other occasions so tender-hearted should with fair-minded people deprive Caracciolo of the last claim upon their pity; for if on any ground he merited compassion, Nelson would have been the last man to deny it him.

In due time the throne was re-established and the King, to show his gratitude, conferred on Nelson a dukedom and (to maintain it) the estate of Bronte in Sicily, valued at £3,000 a year. Nelson was averse to taking so munificent an appanage, and only consented when he discovered that his refusal would wound the honour of Ferdinand. King George graciously consented to Nelson's acceptance of the foreign title, but the Admiral never flaunted it in the eyes of his countrymen. "Nelson and Bronte" he signed himself; but this was the only change.

Meanwhile the blockade of Malta continued. The ships alone could not enforce its surrender, though they could prevent its relief. Nelson set over the operations Captain Ball, whom like Troubridge he trusted as himself.\* There were no regular troops, no

\* On the surrender of the island Ball was knighted and became the first Governor. There is a delightful sketch of him in Marryat's *Midshipman Easy* where he figures as "Old Tom". Coleridge was for a time his secretary.

siege-train. There was little enough ammunition. Had Nelson been free from embarrassments in Sicily and Naples he would doubtless have found means to bring the blockade to an earlier close. In the spring of 1800 he appeared in person off Malta and the magic of his presence seemed at once to vitalize the dull monotony of the siege. Unconsciously timing their attempt almost for the hour of his arrival, the French tried to relieve the hungry garrison. Their corn-ships were attended by the *Généreux*, one of the two ships that had escaped from the Nile. Nelson's flag at this time was flying in the *Foudroyant*. He chased the *Généreux* and captured her with his own hands.

This is how he did it.\*

When the chase was sighted all ships crowded canvas, but the *Northumberland* took the lead. Nelson turned to Berry.

"This will not do, Sir Ed'ard. It is certainly *Le Généreux*, and to my flag-ship alone she can surrender. Sir Ed'ard, we must and shall beat the *Northumberland*. Make the *Foudroyant* fly!"

"I will do the utmost, my lord. Get the engine to work on the sails. Hang butts of water to the stays. Pipe the hammocks down, and each man place shot in them. Slack the stays. Knock up the wedges and give the masts play. Start off the water, Mr. James, and pump the ship."

As the *Foudroyant* drew ahead, and at last took the lead, Nelson's agitation betrayed itself in the movements of the stump of his arm. "The Admiral is working his fin," whispered Berry to a junior. "Do not cross his hawse, I advise you." The advice was good, for at that moment Nelson opened furiously on the petty officer at the con.

"I'll knock you off your perch, you rascal, if you are so inattentive. Sir Ed'ard, send your best quarter-master to the weather-wheel."

"A strange sail ahead of the chase!" called the lookout man.

"Youngster, to the masthead. What! going without your glass, and be damned to you? Let me know what she is immediately."

"A sloop of war or frigate, my lord."

\* The following account (with slight alterations) is from the *Reminiscences* of Lieutenant G. S. Parsons, who was serving at the time in the *Foudroyant*.



"Demand her number."

"The *Success*, my lord."

"Signal her to cut off the flying enemy. Great odds, though! Thirty-two small guns to eighty large ones."

"The *Success*, my lord, has hove to athwart-hawse of the *Généreux* and is firing her larboard broadside. The Frenchman has hoisted his tricolour with a Rear-Admiral's flag."

"Bravo! *Success*, at her again!"

"She has wore, my lord, and is firing her starboard broadside. . . . It has winged the chase, my lord. Her flying kites are flying away altogether."

The *Généreux* now opened fire on the frigate and every one stood aghast, fearing the consequence. But when the smoke cleared there was the *Success*, crippled it is true, but bulldog-like, bearing up after the enemy.

"Signal the *Success* to discontinue the action and come under my stern," said Nelson. "She had done well for her size. Try a shot from the lower deck at her, Sir Ed'ard."

"It goes over her."

"Beat to quarters and fire coolly and deliberately at her masts and yards."

At this moment a shot from the *Généreux* passed through the *Foudroyant's* mizen stay-sail, and Nelson patting one of the youngsters on the head asked him jocularly how he relished the music. Observing something like alarm depicted on his countenance he consoled him with the information that Charles XII ran away from the first shot he heard. "Therefore," he concluded, "I hope much from you in future."

Soon after this amid the thunder of the cannon the *Généreux's* tricolour came down.

Malta had nothing to hope for now, and General Vaubois, unable to hold out much longer, resolved to diminish the mouths that cried in vain for food by sending away as many as he could in a warship that lay in the harbour. This was the *Guillaume Tell*, the very last of the fatal thirteen that fought at Aboukir. Vaubois waited for a pitch-dark night and a favourable wind. Then he bade the ship fly, but within an hour she was sighted by the *Penelope* (Captain Blackwood) and the little frigate screamed with all her

guns for assistance. The *Foudroyant*, of course, was early on the scene, and to the *Foudroyant* the *Guillaume Tell* surrendered!

This auspicious occasion should have been one of the proudest moments in Nelson's life: for now to the very letter was fulfilled the injunction given to him by Lord St. Vincent "to take, burn, sink or destroy" the fleet that bore Napoleon to Egypt. But when the *Guillaume Tell* surrendered Nelson himself was not on board. He was lying sick ashore. Ever since the Nile his health had been wretched. He had had worries enough to kill the strongest. He had had no respite to recover from the racking fatigue occasioned by the search for Brueys' fleet. An occasional holiday was essential for one of his delicate physique, and his victory surely entitled him to it. But instead had come torturing after-effects from the wound in his head. Nelson never allowed himself to complain in a public dispatch and so was left in lingering pain when he should have been carried home to enjoy a triumph.\*

And there was another trouble at this time that almost broke his heart. On the retirement of Lord St. Vincent the command of the Mediterranean was given to Lord Keith. Nelson was subordinated after his greatest achievement to one whose name to-day carries a sound of unfamiliarity. Not only was he persistently called aside from what he was doing to attend the behests of his superior; but he was reduced once more to the status he had occupied in the days of Hotham's *régime*. As Captain of the *Agamemnon* his feelings had nearly choked him. What then must he have felt with the laurels of the Nile about his brow when he was hurried about from pillar to post as if he had been commander of a gun-brig?

In July, 1800, he received leave of absence and started for home. He may have felt sorry to withdraw before Malta surrendered (5th September), but it did not really matter, as in no case would he have had the credit. Lord Keith would not spare him a battleship to return, so that he travelled overland through Vienna, Prague, Dresden and Hamburg. His progress through France-

\* There is a portrait of Nelson painted in *Foudroyant* days by a Neapolitan artist called Guzzardi. Anybody familiar with the pictures of the Admiral by Abbott, Beechy, and Hoppner would stare in amazement at this. The whole face is drawn with pain and misery and suffering.

hating Germany was one prolonged gala. He received the homage of all ranks from princes to peasants. In one place an inn-keeper raked in a small fortune by allowing the curious to climb up a ladder and see the great Lord Nelson at his dinner. When he landed at Yarmouth in November, 1800, he found that the lapse of two years had done nothing to diminish the public interest in his victory. The adoring crowds shouted themselves hoarse at his appearance and put themselves between the shafts whenever he went for a drive. Their adulation set the good blood coursing through his veins again. He forgot about his head. He forgot all about Lord Keith. Before he left Yarmouth he offered his services with all the enthusiasm of old days. "First-rate or sloop of war," he wrote, "is a matter of perfect indifference!"

THE BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN,  
OR  
THE BATTLE OF THE BALTIC

APRIL 2, 1801

O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,  
O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile.

—TENNYSON.

It was something more than a coincidence which brought Nelson home from the Mediterranean at the end of 1800, for the menace to Great Britain was no longer from the South. It had sprung up in a new form nearer home.

Bonaparte was once more in France. Unable to rescue his army from the predicament into which Nelson's victory had thrown it, he had crawled home undetected in a little ship, overthrown the Government, established himself as First Consul, undone at Marengo all that Austria had achieved during his absence, and turned once more with zest to the problem of humiliating England. With this end he played upon the feelings of Paul I, the half-witted Czar of Russia. Paul was Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, and Bonaparte, unable to keep Malta for himself, bequeathed it to what he termed its rightful suzerain. The Czar demanded Britain's evacuation of the island, and meeting refusal, turned to Bonaparte for advice. Bonaparte urged the revival of the Armed

Neutrality, which during the crisis of the American War had added so materially to England's difficulties. Sweden and Denmark,\* with grievances of a more material kind, were ready to join. For so long as Britain decided for herself what contraband comprised and overhauled all neutral ships in search of it, they were unable to make anything out of the war: and were gravely hindered in the pursuance of their ordinary trade relations.

As Britain depended on the Baltic for oak and cordage and canvas, the Armed Neutrality, backed as it was by Bonaparte, constituted a grave peril, which she could not overlook. She cherished the hope that her difficulties with the northern Powers might still be peaceably adjusted, but resolved during the negotiations to assume an attitude of iron firmness.

It was this mixed feeling that induced her to adopt a course of action which to-day seems so preposterous, so misguided and insane; the choice of Sir Hyde Parker as Commander-in-Chief, the delegation of Lord Nelson to the second place. Sir Hyde was sent in case the Baltic Powers should prove tractable; Nelson that the blow might be forcible if a blow were delivered at all. Ministers made sure that wholesale destruction would overtake somebody if Nelson was in supreme power; and this was really a compliment though perforce a veiled one. Peace, however, was uppermost in their minds and rightly so. Where they were unforgivably wrong was in supposing that Sir Hyde would prove superior to his junior in any capacity whatsoever. Unfortunately it was not until the conclusion of the campaign that they discovered in Nelson those qualities of tact, humanity and political insight which they might have taken for granted from the first if they had reposed in him at the outset the trust he so fully deserved.

Of Sir Hyde Parker there is not very much to be said. He was the son of "Vinegar" Parker, Rodney's Admiral, from whom he inherited the family baronetcy. Nelson had already served with him, for Sir Hyde had been chief of staff to Hood at Toulon and held an *interim* command in the Mediterranean between the tenures of Hotham and Jervis. He was a wealthy man and desired to signalize his appointment to high command by giving a ball at Yarmouth before he started. But the Admiralty got wind of his intention and bundled him off rather brusquely. His flag

\* Norway at this time belonged to Sweden.

flew in the *London* and Nelson's in the *St. George*. Nelson took Hardy as his captain.

Parker was anything but pleased at his association with the Victor of the Nile: in fact he was quite inclined to be huffy, and to deny his second all intimacy, all share in his thoughts and plans. Nelson could not allow this soreness to continue one day longer than was necessary. He knew that Sir Hyde was something of a gourmet and would relish a delicacy all the more when they had just left the good things behind: and so as they crossed the Dogger Bank he set his men to fish for turbot. No other fish would do and at last a fine one was hooked. Nelson sent it to his Commander-in-Chief with a message of kindly goodwill: and in this strange way their quarrel was ended before it had well begun.

The Baltic navies were designed for commerce-protection and the patrol of shoaly seas. They were largely made up of the lower rates. Yet there was no lack of battleships. Russia had twenty ready to fight, Sweden had eleven and Denmark ten. The union of all into one grand fleet would present a truly formidable combination, and Parker, with a force of less than half, hoped against hope in his inmost soul that the allies would not provoke him to chastise them.

Arriving at the southern end of the Cattegat he halted three days for the return of an ambassador who had preceded the fleet to Copenhagen in a fast-sailing frigate. Nelson was furious at the delay. "I hate your pen-and-ink men," he said. "A fleet of British ships of war are the best negotiators in Europe."

On 23rd March the ambassador joined them. He was crest-fallen. The Danes were intractable. They were fortifying their capital; making it, if he knew anything, impenetrably strong. A Council of War was summoned. Parker set his views before it. Here at the end of the Cattegat they occupied the position which correct strategy prescribed. No battle-fleet could emerge from the Baltic without their knowledge, or pass them without giving battle. They controlled every movement of the "Armed Neutrality," which they could certainly never do if they were rash enough to enter the Baltic and ramble about from place to place. Parker's arguments were specious. They met with some support. But Nelson hacked them to pieces. They had come on a definite

mission. That mission was to break up the "Armed Neutrality". They had tested the efficacy of pacific measures. Pacific measures had failed. The time had come to strike. Was it consonant with Britain's dignity to sit submissively at the entrance to the Baltic like one afraid to intrude? Let them enter at once and reiterate their demands with the power of the fleet behind them.

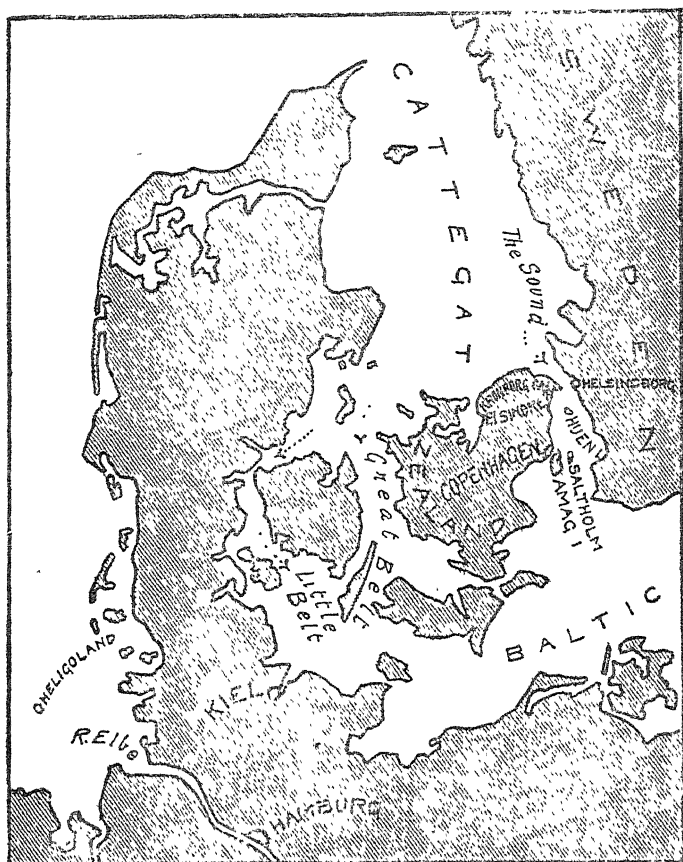
Parker yielded and Nelson continued his argument. Their wisest course, as it appeared to him, was to push on at once to the Gulf of Finland and deal with Russia. Russia was at the head of the confederacy, and if she were forced to retire from it, the whole coalition would come down like a house of cards. After events proved the correctness of his judgment in this as in everything else. But Parker joined issue with him here. They had direct evidence from the ambassador that the Danes were arming. It would be bad generalship to pass by Copenhagen leaving an undefeated enemy in their rear. In vain Nelson pleaded that it would be sufficient to leave a squadron of observation, and push on with the pick of the fleet. Parker on this point was stubborn.

It was therefore determined without delay to make an attack on Denmark.

There are three waterways joining the Cattegat and the Baltic; the Sound, the Great Belt and the Little Belt. Of these the last named was quite impossible. There were therefore two alternative routes. Of these the Great Belt was the more difficult. It was made perilous with bars and shoals and banks. It was to all intents uncharted. The main waterway was the Sound. It was the principal channel of the Baltic trade. It offered an easy passage whose course if tortuous was well-known. But then, as the highway to Copenhagen, it was strongly fortified. The mouth of the Strait but a mile or two in width was commanded on the Danish side by Kronborg Castle and the defences of Elsinore, and on the Swedish side by the city of Helsingborg.

Parker was in favour of engaging the castles in conversation and slipping through the Sound. Nelson was in favour of the Belt. Even at this early hour he had worked out in his own brain the essential principle, that in the end proved Denmark's undoing. Copenhagen must be attacked from the south! To assault Copenhagen from the north, to engage in succession all the de-

fences with which the Danes guarded their natural approach, was to take the bull by the horns. Let them navigate the Belt and, doubling back, come upon their enemy unawares; for in so doing



DENMARK AND THE ENTRANCES TO THE BALTIC

they would gain a double advantage. They would sever the Danes from their friends: and while they attacked Copenhagen with one half of their fleet they could with the other effectively prevent the approach of Russians and Swedes. And what was still

more to the point: the fair wind that enabled them to deliver their assault: (blowing as it did from the south) would enable them also, when the battle was over, to make sail in the direction they desired, instead of being carried against their will into the heart of a hostile sea. All this and more Nelson set before Parker in a letter which he composed at the conclusion of the Council of War. It was a convincing note with "The boldest methods are the safest" for its text; famous words that have passed into a proverb.

On the 26th they entered the Belt and cautiously began to feel their way through its mazy windings. But Sir Hyde would not tolerate the burden of anxiety. Hardly was he in than he was out again, and prepared to consider the whole problem afresh. Nelson's patience was almost exhausted. "Go by the Sound or by the Belt or anyhow," he said. "Only lose not an hour!" Lose not an hour! For three days there were head winds or dead calms and the fleet remained stationary. Ten days in all had passed and nothing done: ten days for the Danes to perfect their defence.

Sir Hyde now opened negotiations with the Governor of Kronborg Castle. If the British stood through the strait, he asked, would the Governor take steps to stop them? The Governor very naturally replied that he would. His nuncio, having occasion to write, picked up in the *London's* cabin a stubby quill-pen. "If your guns are not better pointed than your pens," he said, "you will make little impression on Copenhagen." Sir Hyde's dilatoriness almost justified such insolence. The same messenger learned with astonishment that Nelson made one of the fleet.

On 30th March they entered the Sound, Nelson's division in the van. The Governor of Kronborg opened fire. But his shots dropped short; and as the Swedes did nothing to second his endeavours, Parker and Nelson steered a course somewhat nearer to the eastern bank and so escaped without injury. About midday they dropped anchor under the lee of Huen Island: and in the afternoon set out in a lugger to inspect the preparations of the Danes.

Copenhagen is situated partly on the large island of Zealand, partly on the small island of Amag. The Channel between the two forms what is called "The Harbour". On one side of it in 1801 frowned the guns of the Citadel: on the other were the Trekroner or Three Crown\* batteries perched on two artificial

\* Norway, Sweden and Denmark were at one time united.

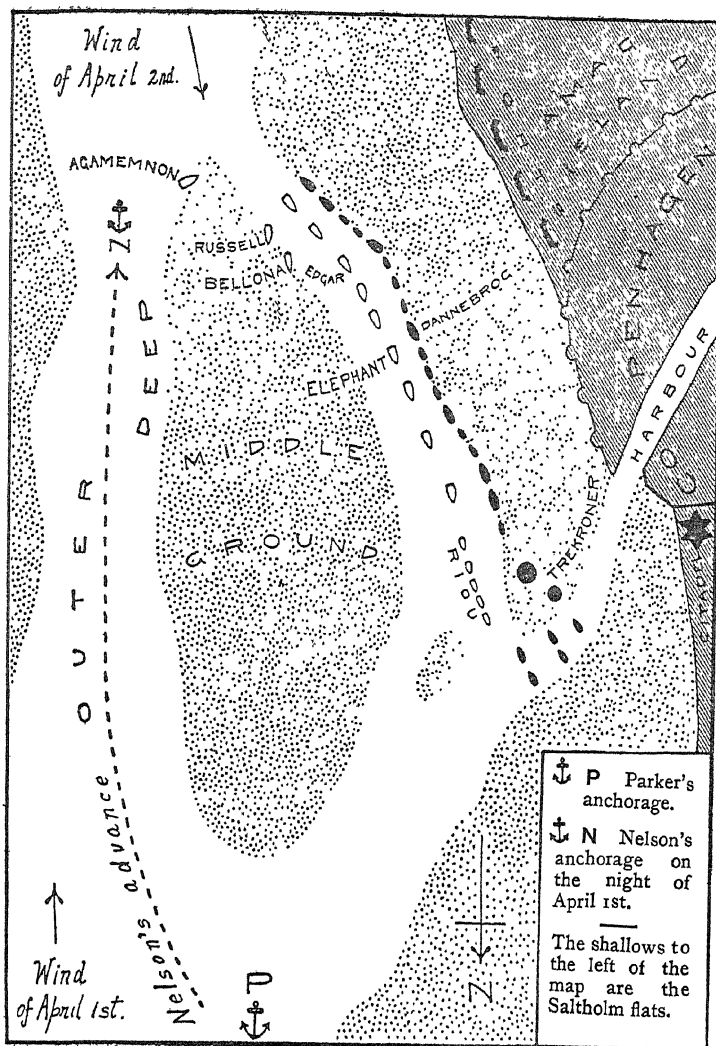


islands piled up in the midst of the flood. These mounted between them some seventy guns and constituted therefore the very teeth of the defence for "it was a saying at this time that three guns in a fort were a match for a three-decker afloat". To complete the defences of the Harbour four or five large vessels had been warped into its mouth. But the depth of water would not accommodate a seventy-four, so that the warships had to take their chance in the roadstead. Here they were skilfully drawn up on the five-fathom contour in a line extending almost due south. Their rear was securely guarded by the flats: their left wing was as securely guarded by the unanswerable ordnance of the *Trekroner*. As they were anchored in line ahead their broadsides presented an unbroken mile of fire. There were eighteen ships in all; third-rates, fourth-rates; East Indiamen; transports specially pierced for the occasion; frigates and sloops. One or two of them were fully-rigged, but the majority had their masts sawn off flush with the deck. There was to be no manœuvring: sheer fighting only. The vessels were just so many gun-platforms: call them temporary water-forts or floating-batteries. They enjoyed every advantage that Brueys enjoyed at the Nile with this significant addition that their position could NOT be turned. It was not only excellently chosen for their own protection but for the protection also of the city behind them, where their line of fire was reduplicated by the batteries of Amag Island.

When the *Lark* returned from her reconnaissance a new Council of War was instantly summoned. All were depressed. It was evident that Parker thought that nothing could be done. Many present agreed with him. The thing was clean impossible. Nelson was furious, and spoke with heat. "As the thing is necessary to be done," he said, "the more difficulties the more necessary to try to remove them." And when others, disguising their nervousness under a cloak of foresight, hinted at the probable approach of the Swedes and the numerical strength of the Russians he answered contemptuously: "The more numerous the better. I wish they were twice as many. The easier the victory, depend on it!" Finding the majority of the Council against him, he offered with half of the fleet to demolish the defences of Denmark.

Parker accepted the offer with both hands; gave him ten of the line, two fifties and all the frigates and sloops.

. . . . .



THE BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN

April 2, 1801

If the Three Crown batteries and mile of ships were the sword and spear of Copenhagen, then the shallows formed her shield and buckler. Immediately opposite the town lay the Island of Saltholm, whose banks constricted the Channel between it and Amag to a bare two miles and a half. And right in the fairway lay the Middle Ground, bifurcating the passage; King's Deep on its western side and Outer Deep on its eastern. At the city margin of the King's Deep were the eighteen ships that Nelson intended to smite. How was he to reach them? The obvious plan was to proceed by way of the Trekroner skirting the northern end of the Middle Ground, and massing on the Danish left. This was the approach which the Danes made sure the Britons would utilize. But because they were ready to receive him here Nelson resolved to attack their right. To do so a clue was needed that would lead him through the labyrinth of shoals; for no one knew the boundaries of the Middle Ground, and all the buoys had by the Danes been carefully removed.

Nelson set to work with a will to chart the sands. In person he superintended every detail; bringing to his task all the experience he had accumulated, from the days when as a boy he had explored the lower reaches of the Thames to that supreme hour among the banks of Aboukir. That the Danes might not suspect anything the sounding was done at night. The moment darkness fell on the 31st the boats were out and till earliest dawn they laboured, defining the limits of the Outer Deep.

On the morning of 1st April the whole fleet dropped down from Huen Isle to the north of the Middle Ground. In the afternoon the chosen band left their comrades and with a northerly breeze prepared to enter the perilous confines they had buoyed. They were piloted by the *Amazon* frigate, Captain Riou, whose "gallant and good" qualities Nelson quickly recognized. The *St. George* was too large for the Admiral's purpose and he shifted his flag to Foley's ship, the *Elephant*. But he would not be separated from Hardy, who left the *St. George* and accompanied him as volunteer. The Outer Deep in places was only 500 yards wide, but it was navigated with complete success and the twelve dropped anchor at its southern end. "The moment I have a fair wind, I shall fight," said Nelson, and he signalled to prepare for action.

That night he gave a dinner-party on board the *Elephant*.

Hardy was there and Foley, Colonel Stewart commanding the soldiery, Riou and others. Nelson was in high spirits, as indeed he invariably was when a battle was certain. He drank to a leading wind. His enthusiasm infected the rest. They forgot that they had accepted risks graver than any accepted before. They thought only of the happiness of fighting under one who never failed. At an early hour they departed knowing their leader must be almost exhausted; for he had never turned in at all the night before. Nelson detained Hardy, Foley and Riou. There was still much to be done; and with Foley and Riou he drew up his plan of attack. He was so tired that they persuaded him to lie in his cot: and from there he conducted the discussion and afterwards dictated the necessary orders. Sleep was impossible: and when all was done, he lay awake shouting injunctions to his secretaries to make haste and finish, for every hour they brought him news of the wind and the news was favourable. The wind was going round to the south and would carry him into battle: into battle, and out when it was over, just as he had explained to Sir Hyde Parker days and days before.

Meanwhile the devoted Hardy was out with the boats. He found the southern limits of the Middle Ground and the trend of its curve to the northward. Then he crossed the "King's Deep" and reckoned the fathoms under the very sides of the Danish ships; sounding his way with the help of a pole lest the noise of the lead should disturb the enemy.

When the glorious 2nd of April dawned Nelson was early astir. He breakfasted: and as soon as it was light summoned all captains to his side. He gave them their instructions and explained everything fully. As he had only twelve ships to the Danish eighteen and as the *Trekroner* required at least two, he was obliged to make very careful dispositions, so that his own small force might press as heavily as possible on the vital points of the enemy's line. The ships were to go into action in the manner first used by Hawke, every vessel passing on the disengaged side of those already at work and taking up her own position immediately ahead. This scheme was first utilized against an enemy in full retreat. The fact that the Danes were at anchor suggested to Nelson an improvement. He arranged that the leader of his own force

should drop anchor alongside not "Number One" but "Number Five" in the Danish array, so that the tip of their right wing might be crushed by numbers defiling past. The ships that eventually anchored here would find their work half done, and on its completion would act as a reserve force and move to the assistance of those ahead.

At 9.30 Nelson signalled to weigh and for a time the fortune of battle lay in the hands of the pilots. These were for the most part mates of merchantmen employed in the Baltic trade. They were accustomed to threading the King's Deep, but in vessels much smaller and handier than a third-rate of the line. They were not only unaccustomed to battleships: they were unaccustomed to work under fire. Their only thought, said Nelson, was to keep their silly heads clear of shot. If they fumbled, there was this for excuse. The King's Deep was narrower than the Outer Deep, especially at its entrance.

But one ship did not weather the Middle Ground: and this of all others, Nelson's well-loved *Agamemnon*. She ran on the east of the shoal and there stuck fast. The *Edgar* ahead of her had in consequence to bear the whole brunt for a time alone, anchoring in the place assigned to her, opposite enemy "Number Five". Two other Britons made haste to succour her and anchored without mishap. But then came more casualties. The *Bellona* took the ground and then the *Russell*; both of them seventy-fours; a grievous loss.

One quarter of the British force was out of action and the battle hardly begun!

Nelson, seventh in the line, came next astern. It was a critical moment: for the *Bellona* and *Russell*, eager to rectify their mistake, did not at once hoist signals of distress; and the *Elephant's* course lay between them and the bank on which they were stuck! Nelson supposed that they had anchored, and disapproving of their position signalled to them to close. As the flags went up he divined what was wrong; and with lightning decision starboarded his helm. The *Elephant* swung into mid channel and so far as it was possible the situation was saved: for with one accord the remaining ships followed the Master-Pilot.

Nelson anchored alongside the *Dannebrog*, flag-ship of Commodore Fischer. He had designed for himself the *Zealand*, a larger

vessel which lay nearer to the island batteries: but the loss of three sail disarranged his line. It dangerously weakened too the northern half. There were but three ships left to fight ahead of him, and eight or nine Danes to be destroyed. Under the circumstances no battleships could be spared for the Trekroner forts. Nelson, however, had grouped all the frigates and sloops as a reserve force under Riou with instructions to act as the exigencies of the fight required. Riou therefore threw himself into the gap, and with his flotilla strengthened the British right. It was the warmest corner of the battlefield, but he liked it none the less for that.

The battle-thunder rolled from one end of the line to the other.

Each gun  
From its adamant lips  
Spread a death-shade round the ships  
Like the hurricane eclipse  
Of the sun.

Weapon for weapon, man for man, and ship for ship the Danes were not the equals of the Britons. But they were called upon for gunnery alone and as gunners they did their duty valiantly. For long they had been practising ashore and afloat, and the ranks of the seamen were recruited from the army, from the universities, from every grade of society. They fought with that doggedness which recognizes no defeat. They tugged at their guns amid mounds of slain: and when some gallant officer fell at his post another as gallant would row from the land with a boat-load of volunteers. The hours crept slowly by. Eleven! Twelve! One!

Again! Again! Again!  
And the havoc did not slack,  
Till a feeble cheer the Dane  
To our cheering sent us back;—  
Their shots along the deep slowly boom.

The roar of the artillery was music to Nelson; but Sir Hyde Parker heard it with dismay. He had done his best to send two or three of his fleet to Nelson's assistance, but wind and tide were against them. He watched and waited, wondering what he ought to do. He did not know that Riou's squadron had been

practically cut to pieces. He did not know that the *Monarch* at the northern end of the field was almost overpowered, had suffered indeed more casualties than any other British ship throughout the war. But he guessed it. He surveyed the scene, saw the signals of distress flying from three of his own side and heard the Danish broadsides thundering as for three hours they had thundered. He had maintained from the first that the thing was impossible. Events, he feared, were proving him right. After due consideration he made up his mind: and at one o'clock the signal was thrown out on board the *London* for the action to cease. His decision was kindly meant. He intended simply to provide Nelson with a means of escape; if (as he guessed) the crisis was come and was proving insupportable. The crisis had come. In that he was right. Sooner or later, perhaps in a moment, one side or the other must relax its grip. A little thing at such a time will turn the scale: and if Parker's signal had communicated to the thrice-tried warriors his own hesitation and doubt it might well have led to the gravest catastrophe in the annals of the fleet; for the only retreat lay through the jaws of death, under the Trekroner batteries.

"Lord Nelson," writes Colonel Stewart, "was at this time, as he had been during the whole action, walking the starboard side of the quarter-deck; sometimes much animated, and at others heroically fine in his observations. A shot through the main-mast knocked a few splinters about us. He observed to me with a smile: 'It is warm work and this day may be the last to any of us at any moment,' and then stopping short at the gangway, he used an expression never to be erased from my memory and said with emotion, 'but mark you, I would not be elsewhere for thousands'. When the signal, No. 39, was made, the signal lieutenant reported it to him. He continued his walk, and did not appear to take notice of it. The lieutenant meeting his lordship at the next turn asked whether he should repeat it. Lord Nelson answered, 'No; acknowledge it!' On the officer returning to the poop, his lordship called after him, 'Is No. 16 still hoisted?'" This was his favourite signal, the signal for closer action. "The lieutenant answering in the affirmative, Lord Nelson said, 'Mind you keep it so!' He now walked the deck considerably agitated . . . moving the stump of his right arm. After a turn or two, he said to me in







NELSON'S BLIND EYE

"You know, Foley, I have only one eye. I have a right to be blind sometimes."

On the quarter-deck of the *Elephant*. The starboard side of the ship is on the left of the picture. Nelson points his telescope to the north-east where Sir Hyde Parker's Squadron lies. In doing so he turns his back for a moment on the defences of Copenhagen.

a quick manner, 'Do you know what's shown on board of the Commander-in-Chief?—No. 39!' On asking him what that meant, he answered, 'Why, to leave off action'. 'Leave off action!' he repeated, and then added with a shrug, 'Now, damn me if I do'. He also observed to Captain Foley, 'You know, Foley, I have only one eye. I have a right to be blind sometimes.' And then with an archness peculiar to his character, putting the glass to his blind eye, he exclaimed, 'I really do not see the signal!'"

"The squadron of frigates obeyed the signal and hauled off. . . . Captain Riou was killed by a raking shot when the *Amazon* showed her stern to the *Trekroner*. He was sitting on a gun, was encouraging his men, and had been wounded in the head by a splinter. He had expressed himself grieved at being thus obliged to retreat, and nobly observed, 'What will Nelson think of us?' His clerk was killed at his side; and by another shot several of the marines, while hauling on the mainbrace, shared the same fate. Riou then exclaimed, 'Come then, my boys, let us all die together!' The words were scarcely uttered when the fatal shot severed him in two."

If the frigates had stayed any longer they must certainly have been blown to pieces. But not a single ship of the line budged from her place.

The struggle endured for another hour. But towards two the Danish fire slackened and in several ships ceased altogether. The enemy had fought with dauntless valour: but the British perseverance wore them out. It remained for Nelson to take possession of his prizes as fast as the flags came down.

But now a new and unexpected difficulty arose. As Nelson's boats rowed across to take possession, the Danes opened fire on them. This was entirely contrary to the usage and procedure of war; and yet it cannot have been prompted by any desire to curtail suffering or gain an unfair advantage. Witness the *Dannebrog*. The *Dannebrog* lost 270 men out of 336. Then a fire broke out in her and Commodore Fischer hauled down his flag and rehoisted it elsewhere. Nelson sent a boarding-party to the *Dannebrog*, and the *Dannebrog* reopened fire. Nelson returned the compliment and in a short time the Dane with cables severed was drifting before

the wind, one sheet of living flame ; with all her dead and wounded on board and the survivors leaping madly through the portholes. It may have been that the reinforcements who ferried across from the Amag batteries did not stop to inquire on coming aboard what stage the conflict had reached. It may have been that among so many who were not of the sea-service there was an ignorance of the customs governing such matters.

In any case Nelson was put in an extremely awkward predicament. He did not intend that the prizes should escape and yet he was powerless to remove them in the ordinary way. There seemed but a single alternative ; to send down fireships on the conquered foe and set their whole line aflame. The very thought was repugnant to him. His admiration had been roused by the pluck of his enemies and towards them he felt none of the ineradicable hatred that he cherished for Jacobin France. He rather resolved to call for a truce and save the ships and their wounded as well. There was an objection to this ; for he who in the midst of battle first cries, "Halt! enough," either appears to confess himself defeated or to resort to an unworthy *ruse de guerre*. The enemy in the one case adopts an air of magnanimity and in the other wears a look of suspicion. How was Nelson to convince the foe of his sincerity and—superiority ?

Without leaving the deck he wrote them a letter leaning on the casing of the rudder head.

#### TO THE BROTHERS OF ENGLISHMEN, THE BRAVE DANES.

Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson has been commanded to spare Denmark when she no longer resists. The line of defence which covered her shores has struck to the British flag. Let the firing cease, then, that he may take possession of his prizes, or he will blow them into the air along with their crews who have so nobly defended them. The brave Danes are the brothers and should never be the enemies of the English.

The letter finished : next to fasten it. They offered him a wafer. He refused it. There must be no sign of haste : rather some mark of deliberateness here in the turmoil of battle. He sent for a candle and sealing-wax. The man who went below for a candle was killed on the way. Nelson sighed and sent another. Then he made a careful impression with his largest seal : and under flag of truce sent the letter ashore with every circumstance of formality.

. . . . .

The mission was successful beyond his hopes. The Danes had lost on the lowest reckoning two men at least to every one of his.\* Some have set their losses at 7,000. The Crown Prince was unable to withstand the general desire that the wounded should be rescued. So he agreed to a twenty-four hours' armistice. Nelson lost not a minute in gathering up his prizes. Of the eighteen Danes that had fought so well, three and three only escaped. One of them lay under the very shadow of the island batteries and the other two were but tiny things that skimmed away over the shallows. All the rest were taken or sunk.

Thus the Navy of Denmark ceased to exist.

When he came to move his ships out of the King's Deep Nelson found that the armistice had its own particular blessing for himself. Had he consumed the Danish fleet in one great holocaust, he would still have been obliged to fight his way out past the Trekroner. He was prepared to do so, when he had dealt with the ships. But because his business lay with the ships and because that business was finished, there was nothing to be gained by battering masonry, work for which his floating force was unsuited. As a matter of fact, when he ran past the forts the *Elephant* and two others took the ground. Under less favourable circumstances they might conceivably have been blown to bits. With the Trekroner dumb they were in good time removed, and even the *Bellona* and *Russell* were retrieved without further mishap.

The Navy of Denmark being numbered among things of the past, Nelson would have proceeded at once to demolish Sweden and Russia. But Sir Hyde was adamant. Reasserting his authority he declared that nothing would induce him to penetrate farther into the Baltic while Denmark remained in arms. He gave Nelson his kind permission to induce Denmark to forego her hostility. But that was all. So Nelson became an ambassador.

With the faithful Hardy as his *aide-de-camp* and with a body-guard for his protection, he went ashore under a flag of truce. The Danes were a prey to mingled feelings at the sight of him. Because he had destroyed their navy they longed to tear him in pieces; because he had "given their wounds repose," they were grateful; because so fearlessly he ventured his person among them they ad-

\* Nelson lost 900, killed and wounded.

mired while they hated him. Unconscious of the stir he was creating Nelson passed into the presence of the Crown Prince. There was in his address the courtly dignity, in his manner the suave graciousness of the perfect diplomat. By graceful compliment he gained a sympathetic audience. "The French," he said, "fought bravely; but they could not have stood for one hour the fight which the Danes supported for four." Then he proposed his demands. He asked that his ships might have the freedom of all Danish ports: and that Denmark for a period of four months should abandon the Armed Neutrality. To the latter demand the Crown Prince took instant exception: to play Russia false was not consonant with the honour of his country. No care need be taken for the Russians, said Nelson, for in the four months he intended to destroy them. This was diplomacy of an abrupt sort; but the Danes, as Nelson guessed, were bound to Russia by ties, not of friendship, but of fear. While they looked about for new arguments, one of their number, in an unwise moment, spoke of renewing hostilities. This gave Nelson the chance of playing his only trump, and he flung it on the table. "Renew hostilities!" he said. "We are ready at a moment; ready to bombard this very night." "Though I have only one eye," he whispered to Hardy, "I can see all this will burn very well."

In the end he whittled down his demand from four months to fourteen weeks: but this was immaterial. He gained everything he wanted. He advanced his own base 500 miles. He securely guarded his communications. He fettered the hands of Denmark, released his own, and satisfied his Commander-in-Chief.

Sir Hyde before proceeding farther burned all but one of Nelson's prizes. He would not spare a battleship to take them home and could hardly carry them about with him. This done, he pushed into the Baltic through the channel that Nelson had buoyed. Nelson's ship, the *St. George*, was of too heavy a draught. Parker therefore left his second behind! Nelson unshipped his guns, put them on board a merchantman, coaxed the *St. George* through the shallows, reshipped the guns and sped after his graceless commander. Then, just as he heard that the Swedes were out, a head-wind held him back. The news came at eventide: but he did not even stop to take a cloak. He flung himself into a

boat and rowed to Parker's first rendezvous, twenty-five miles away. The night wind chilled him to the bone : but he declared his intention of rowing on to the second rendezvous if the fleet had left the first. And the second was at the very least one hundred and fifty miles.

The fleet had not yet sailed : but the Swedes were disinclined to fight. They had learned wisdom from the battle of the Baltic. Nor yet was there any struggle with Russia : and this although Parker was recalled and Nelson made commander-in-chief. The crazy, truculent, fire-eating Czar was in the thick of the crisis murdered : and Nelson on reaching Russia found a successor whose peaceful inclinations wrecked the confederacy and led to a general adjustment of difficulties. Herein were Nelson's words justified when at Elsinore he said that Russia was a tree and the other Baltic Powers but branches.

One who frequented Nelson's table wrote of him at his death : "I never heard him voluntarily refer to any of the great actions of his life". It is, however, well known that he considered Copenhagen his masterpiece. Captain Mahan describes it as "the most difficult, the most hazardous, and at the moment the most critically important of his victories". This opinion strangely enough was not shared by his employers. The King indeed raised the victor himself one step in the peerage.\* But this was all. Nelson was indignant, not for himself, but for his officers and men. He himself was always so open-handed. When the East India Company gave him £10,000 he distributed £2,000 among his brothers and sisters. When the King of Naples gave him the Bronte estate he saddled it with an annual charge of £500 for his father. No feat of gallantry or skill seen by him ever went without its meed of praise. That was why the sailors loved him. They loved him the more now when he publicly rebuked the authorities for so callously ignoring their claims. "If Lord Nelson could forget the services of those who have fought

\* If this were meant as the measure of Nelson's achievement it was ridiculously inadequate. A viscounty was the least that could have been offered (apart from the battle) for his work as an ambassador. If the Government felt a little nervous lest their stock of rewards should be exhausted before Nelson's capacity for winning victories, then there is something to be said for them !

under his command," ran his letter to the Lord Mayor, "he would ill deserve to be supported as he always has been."

In vain. He could induce Denmark to do what he willed. He could even galvanize a Parker into action. But he could not induce his countrymen to give his gallant lads a copper medal.

Splinters were flying above, below,  
 When Nelson sailed the Sound:  
 "Mark you, I wouldn't be elsewhere now,"  
 Said he, "for a thousand pound!"  
 The Admiral's signal bade him fly,  
 But he wickedly wagged his head,  
 He clapped the glass to his sightless eye  
 And "I'm damned if I see it," he said. —NEWBOLT.

## THE TRAFALGAR CAMPAIGN. 1803-1805

### CHAPTER I. THE BLOCKADE OF TOULON

I do not say that the French cannot come. I only say they cannot come by sea.—EARL ST. VINCENT.

Not many months after Copenhagen, negotiations were entered into, and in the spring of 1802 the war of the French Revolution was concluded by the Peace of Amiens. Glad to be released, Nelson spent the happiest twelvemonth of his life at Merton, an estate which he had purchased, on the road from London to Portsmouth. Never before had he had a house entirely his own. He was immensely pleased by the feeling of proprietorship; loved sitting in the high-backed pew on a Sunday; and did good by stealth among his poorer neighbours.

But Amiens was really no more than a truce. Britain had proved herself invincible upon the sea and France upon the land. Napoleon desired an interval in which to establish his despotism and prepare a new scheme to destroy the "nation of shopkeepers" who thwarted him. Britain desired peace but could not disguise her suspicion of his motives. With magnificent insolence he feigned surprise at this, and attempted to browbeat her Ministers. He rode rough-shod over his own promises and at the same time demanded the instant evacuation of Malta, their only pledge for his good behaviour. This was too much; and in May, 1803, they surprised him with a declaration of war. The First Consul was not ready. He had not yet assumed the Imperial Crown. He had not yet completely compassed his plan for their destruction.

England gave her principal sea commands to Nelson and Cornwallis. The latter, who had made such a name in the American War, had been badly served by fortune in the war just brought to a close. After service in India he had returned to the Channel just as Jervis and Nelson were making the Mediterranean the station for honour. On one occasion, however, with five ships only he had met the entire French fleet. He engaged their vanguard with his flag-ship, while the rest of his force drew away, and in the end brought all into safety by sending ahead the *Phaethon* frigate to signal in an open code the approach of the Channel Fleet. No one afloat ever scored off "Billy Blue"; and a safer man to hold the Brest command could not have been discovered in the Navy List.

Nelson at last received the command which he had desired so long; which had been denied him so often, the scene of his triumphant exploits, the Mediterranean. And for his flag the *Victory* was named, the *Victory* that still floats in Portsmouth harbour. She was an historic ship in 1803, and in every way worthy to carry her master. She had served as flagship to Keppel at the battle of Ushant, to Howe at the relief of Gibraltar, to Hood at Toulon, and to Jervis at the battle of St. Vincent.\*

Since her last appearance she had been practically rebuilt and was considered the smartest first-rate in the service.

Nelson could not conceal his eagerness to be gone. "I cannot sail before to-morrow and that's an age," he cried. In the end he left the *Victory* to follow and scurried off to his station in a frigate. He arrived in July, 1803, and opened what was to prove by far the most memorable blockade ever maintained by wooden walls. Hours turned into days, days into weeks, weeks into months and months into years: and still the great leader mounted guard, giving in this a new exhibition of his many-sidedness; for the watch he kept over Toulon required virtues very different from the fiery impatience which had hurled destruction on Spaniard, Frenchman, and Dane. He had, it must be understood, no dock-yard behind him, no place for occasional repose, no base o.

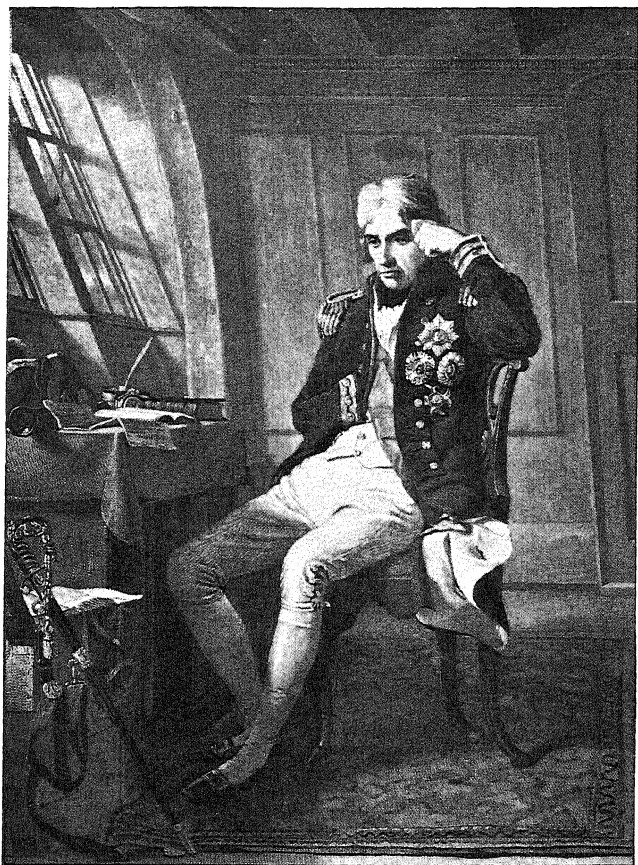
\* The resolution to build her was arrived at in the year of Nelson's birth. Laid down at Chatham in the "Year of Victories" she took six years to build and was launched in 1765. She displaced 3400 tons, mounted 104 guns, and in a fair breeze could sail ten knots an hour.



supplies. From the very first he was inferior to the blockaded force. And reinforcements seldom if ever reached him from home. There he lay in the Gulf of Lions at the mercy of its storms: never complaining: finding every day on the contrary some valuable asset he had overlooked, some new quality in his fleet which made it a pleasure to command.

The like had not been seen since Hawke's blockade of Brest in the months preceding Quiberon: for the fleet actually improved by keeping. Nelson made the happiness of the men his own personal care. He fed them well: gathered from every shore abundance of fresh meat and vegetables; scoured the Mediterranean for dainties; coaxed the men to give up their grog in exchange for light Italian vintages; and bade defiance to scurvy by lemons from Sicily and shallots from Spain. And he banished monotony. He encouraged music, dancing, variety entertainments and exchange of hospitality between ships. He refused to allow hands to get jaded by the ceaseless round of dull duties. The storms, he said, provided ample opportunity for seacraft. Without endangering discipline he relaxed the grip of routine. He was more than repaid. The ships instead of praying for release dreaded lest necessity should drive them home: for timbers of course grew rotten and vessels crazy. But the health of the fleet was unprecedented. There was only one sick man in the fleet. And that was Nelson. The gales made him sea-sick: the daily anxiety which he disguised so well brought a throbbing pain in the stump of his arm: and his left eye, sympathetically affected, gave him good cause to fear that he would soon be totally blind. His body grew daily weaker, but his spirit conquered. "I must not be sick," he said, "until after the French fleet is taken:" and again: "I would die ten thousand deaths rather than give up my command when the enemy is expected every day at sea".

The memoirs of his chaplain and doctors afford a glimpse of his life on board the *Victory* at this time. He was called just before daylight. He immediately dressed and repaired on deck till breakfast was announced, when with Captain Hardy his inseparable friend, his chaplain, secretary, and one or two officers he would sit down to tea, hot rolls, toast and cold tongue. After breakfast, if not occupied in reading or writing dispatches or examining into the details of the fleet, he walked on the quarter-deck the greater part



NELSON IN HIS CABIN ON BOARD THE *VICTORY*

On his breast he wears the Grand Cross of the Sardinian Order of San Joachim; above it on the right the Turkish Order of the Crescent, and on the left the Grand Cross of the Neapolitan Order of San Ferdinand; over all the Order of the Bath. To the left of the picture are the stern windows. Behind Nelson to the right a door leads into the Quarter Gallery.



of the forenoon. But often he would spend hours with his chaplain, Dr. Scott, who would translate aloud to him French, Spanish and Italian newspapers which he was always at pains to procure, together with letters public and private, taken in prizes. From these Nelson declared he got a more reliable insight into what was being done upon the Continent than from all the secret intelligence, official or otherwise.

From two o'clock a band played until a quarter to three when the drum beat to announce the Admiral's dinner. Weather permitting, he had several of his captains to dine with him. Their meal consisted of three courses with the choicest fruits, wines, coffee and liqueurs. But Nelson partook very sparingly himself; the wing of a fowl and a small plate of macaroni with a glass of champagne and water. At six his own little circle joined him for tea and fell into debate until eight or nine when the Admiral turned in. He seldom slept for more than two hours at a time. Often he would not quit the deck the whole night, and on these occasions he took no pains to protect himself from the weather. To dry his stockings he would often walk to and fro on the carpet in his cabin. This was to save his servants trouble: for with only one arm he could not change his clothes himself.

One dark stormy night there was a cry of "Man Overboard," and in a moment a midshipman was over the side saving a seaman's life at the risk of his own. Nelson was delighted and made him a lieutenant at once. The preferment was greeted with much applause from the young man's messmates. Nelson heard something ominous in the cheers. He therefore made them a little speech. "Mr. Flin," he said, "has done a gallant thing to-day and many gallant things in the past. For these I reward him. But mind, I'll have no more lieutenants for men falling overboard."

A notable feature of Nelson's blockade was his stern refusal to be drawn into a "half-begotten" battle of the French pattern. He cared nothing to capture one ship or two if the consequent injuries to his own side forced his fleet to withdraw altogether. This determination led to a humorous incident. M. Latouche-Tréville played in and out of Toulon like a mouse at the edge of its hole. One day he emerged to exercise his ships and a small British advance guard, bearing in mind the Admiral's instructions,

fell back on the main body. Because both English and French were sailing simultaneously south, Tréville, desiring to curry favour, sent to Napoleon saying that he had offered battle, but that Nelson had withdrawn in haste! "You have seen Latouche's letter," wrote Nelson, "how he chased me and how I ran. I keep it; and if I take him, by God I shall make him eat it!"

Nelson was cheated of his revenge; for Tréville died suddenly. He was replaced by Admiral Villeneuve, the most accomplished officer in the French service, and quite the ablest tactician. On the score of bravery his name alone was a diploma: for a Villeneuve fell beside Roland at Roncesvalles and a Villeneuve was bosom friend to the Chevalier Bayard. But it was for none of these reasons that Napoleon chose him. Napoleon was a firm believer in luck and Villeneuve was the one flag-officer who had carried his ship intact from the carnage of Aboukir.

Nelson's chief difficulty in the blockade arose when for water or other urgent need his ships were obliged to visit harbour. He felt it impossible to send them two or three at a time: because his fleet seldom numbered more than eight and the smallest detachment reduced it to impotence. Therefore when occasion arose he took the whole fleet away together: not to the Straits, but to some harbour in Sardinia so as still to be as near as possible. In so doing he was compelled to leave Toulon open; and though he comforted himself by the reflection that this might lead to a fight, it was certain that the Toulonese were busy with great preparations, and that Villeneuve might take advantage of his absence to be off on some errand of mischief.

And so indeed it proved in the beginning of 1805. Nelson was in Sardinia and his frigates informed him that the French were out. The wind which had been east for a fortnight was now blowing steady from north-west, and freshening every minute. In such weather no one could really make the Straits and Nelson concluded that Napoleon meditated some fresh raid on the Ottoman Empire. Off he winged; and after putting a girdle round the entire Mediterranean was back at Toulon by the end of March to find the French snugly in port. He had not lost a single spar in spite of the wild weather: and was pleased to hear that Villeneuve's fleet had behaved in lubberly fashion, shed a few topmasts in the Gulf of Lions and hurried back under

cover. But he was more puzzled than ever to know what their intentions were.

These can only be explained by reference to Napoleon's scheme for "terminating the existence of the Power that had oppressed France for six centuries".

At Boulogne he had gathered the army of England. He had collected there thousands of flat-bottomed boats. He was prepared in two hours to embark 150,000 men.\* But before doing so it was essential that he should, for a definite period,† exercise undisputed control of the Channel from Cape Gris Nez to the Lizard. His first need was to remove the British fleet. A difficult problem. But setting aside the expedients of the past, he approached it in the light of his own experience. In 1798 a combined expedition from Toulon had drawn after it to Egypt the British force in the Mediterranean. If similar expeditions, he argued, set out from Brest and Toulon for more distant lands, India perhaps and the Lesser Antilles; then the whole naval power of Britain would be deflected from European waters.

Such was his scheme in its first hard outline. But closer study of the whole problem showed him it was insufficient. The presence of British small craft in the Channel made it impossible for his army to cross without a battle-fleet escort. He must therefore rid himself of the British fleet and at the same time employ his own. He altered his plan. To reinforce his naval power he dragged Spain into the war. He had fleets at Toulon, Carthage, Cadiz, Coruña-Ferrol, and Brest. If united these would make an armada, some fifty or sixty strong. He resolved to unite them: not in Europe; but at a distant and secret rendezvous. Each squadron in turn would elude the British blockade, slip out of Brest and disappear. The result would be the same as in the former case. The British would disperse; some to Egypt, some to India, some to the Antilles, some to Canada. But his own fleets would unite at Fort Royal, Martinique, return invincible and hold the Channel.

This new scheme pleased the great master of war: but as its success in great degree depended on the simultaneous departure of half a dozen fleets, he judged further modification needful, and

\* His own untruthful estimate: 90,000 in eighteen hours would be nearer the truth.

† Varying in his different estimates from four days to half a dozen hours.

introduced fresh amendment. He left the Rochefort squadron to act by itself; but he instructed the Toulon fleet after setting out to pick up the ships at Carthagen and Cadiz; and the Brest fleet to call at Ferrol. Three fleets instead of six would thus join at Fort Royal. And one safeguard suggested another. Admiral Villeneuve was warned to stay in the Indies not longer than forty days. If the period passed without news of the rest, then would he sail at once to Ferrol, unite his ships with the squadron there and in overpowering strength drive off Cornwallis and release the fleet at Brest.\* But this last alternative was for use only in extremity. The three fleets, it was hoped, would join without mishap.

Any military plan formed by the great Napoleon must command respect, and the present though dealing with a maze of details attracts by the magic of its harmony. Yet at the core it was unsound.

Napoleon was handicapped by ignorance of oceanic campaigning. When he suggested driving off Cornwallis and releasing the fleet at Brest he was asking his Admirals an impossible thing. For whatever might be their superiority, the wind which enabled them to attack the blockading force would effectively prevent the fleet in port from weighing anchor and joining them.

Examples might be multiplied. But after all Napoleon's capital error lay in his failure to appreciate the Admirals opposed to him. For one thing he classed them altogether: instead of crediting Nelson with strategic skill equal to his own. Who won the campaign of 1798? What security had he that Nelson would not detect as easily and overthrow as ruthlessly this scheme as he had done the Egyptian? It was secret. It was complex. It was appointed for the other side of the world. Were these guarantees sufficient?

And suppose that the British Admirals were all alike. Even so, he was grievously at fault. For his every plan presupposed that they would act, not as British Admirals had acted in the past, but as he, Napoleon, required in the present. In his first scheme they were to follow his armaments to the Lesser Antilles and India. But would they do so? Was it certain? They might prefer to stay at home. And if they preferred to stay at

\* Reciprocal instructions were issued to the fleet at Brest. The fleet at Rochefort was negligibly small.

home when they knew where his squadrons were going, what was there to induce them to play blind-man's buff when the destination of his fleets remained a secret!

The British without knowing a detail of Napoleon's scheme had from centuries of experience evolved a method of defence which supplied a complete answer. Their idea was this. Any British blockading force confronted with difficulties which it could not surmount would simply fall back on Cornwallis at Brest. That was all! Therefore suppose that Napoleon achieved the very maximum of success. Suppose that all his squadrons escaped from port; reunited at Martinique and sailed majestically back. Then on their arrival at the mouth of the Channel they would find waiting them a British fleet comprising every single ship that had taken part in the blockade. And this British fleet would be fresher far than themselves who had crossed the Atlantic.

England in "eighteen hundred and war-time" was in a finer panic than any that had seized her since the days of Drake. Every citizen became a soldier. Even the Premier donned a uniform. Martello towers were built along the coast, beacons erected on every high hill, a military canal dug out in Kent. There was not a landsman but thought that the conqueror who entered every metropolis from Moscow to Lisbon would sooner or later "cross the ditch which offered no real difficulties to the audacious". And this panic that robbed our forefathers of repose has become in a sense traditional. It is still regarded as reasonable, excusable and real.

There is no need at all to quarrel with the view. But it was not shared by the sailors. Cornwallis and Nelson at sea just as much as Jervis at the Admiralty knew that Napoleon must wait for his fleet and that his fleet would never reach Boulogne. It is necessary at the outset to insist on this, for the absolute confidence of the sailors in the security of their defence led them cheerfully to accept risks and hazards which might well be described as astounding if the Trafalgar Campaign had been defensive. The Trafalgar Campaign was never defensive. It was England who declared war: and her sailors from that moment strove so completely to crush the navy of France that never during the remainder of the war should it dare to challenge them. Trafalgar did not deliver England from invasion. It established her domination of



the waterways and enabled her from the great deep to work out the deliverance of Europe.\*

## CHAPTER II. THE CHASE

Round the world if need be, and round the world again,  
With a lame duck lagging all the way!

—NEWBOLT.

Villeneuve's first rush out of port on a westerly breeze was a false start. Soon after Nelson's return from Egypt he was ready to try again; and when on 30th March a fair wind rose in the north there was nothing but a frigate or two to hinder his escape. He crept out and by good fortune learned that Nelson was off Sardinia watering. Borne easily along by the following wind he had the further good fortune to shake off Nelson's cruisers, and slipping between the coast of Spain and the Balearic Isles, he called at Carthagenia for its squadron, then bolted through the Straits and paused breathlessly at Cadiz. There was a small British squadron here under Sir John Orde; but it was too weak to resist him and fell back before him on Cornwallis. Had it hung upon his coat-tails, it might have learned where he was going; but with a run of luck that almost justified the motives for Napoleon's choice, Villeneuve started off across the Atlantic unobserved; and on 14th May arrived at Martinique. The Cadiz ships added to his own made up a fleet of eighteen sail; a force already double the size of that which under Nelson he had left behind. So far Napoleon's expectations were fulfilled to the smallest letter.

Villeneuve's orders allowed him in his interval of waiting to do whatever damage he could to the British islands. But waiting was his preoccupation. He besieged the British in an islet which they had brazenly seized off Martinique and christened "H.M. Sloop *Diamond Rock*"; but he went about the task half-heartedly. He was thinking all the while of the other fleets. In conse-

\* There is some reason to believe that Napoleon's belief in his invasion scheme was no firmer than that of Lord St. Vincent. Why otherwise did he bolster it up with such mendacious comedies as the medal "Frappée à Londres"? But in any case he stood to gain. If he landed in England, well; if he "was prevented from doing so by the fatuous behaviour of our Admirals" (!) at least he had at Boulogne excuse for mobilizing an army which he could at any moment employ against Austria.

quence it was not till 3rd June that the "sloop" hauled down her flag.

Another fleet arrived next day.

Which was it? Was it the fleet from Rochefort? Or the larger fleet from Brest?

It was the British Mediterranean Fleet under Admiral Lord Nelson of the Nile!

. . . . .  
In the name of wonder how did he do it? How did he know where the French had gone? How did he overtake them? There is a temptation to ascribe all to the wonder-working intuition of genius. Something of course must be allowed for this. But Nelson grounded his resolution to cross the Atlantic on something more admirable than guesswork.

When in Sardinia he heard that Villeneuve was out again, he had not, it is true, the dimmest idea of Villeneuve's destination. The West Indies suggested themselves but, in the face of persistent rumours that India was in danger, he provisioned for Bombay, and shipped a specialist in Oriental languages. All was vague. "Every country formed a possible objective."

He had, however, on his return from Egypt set a line of frigates from the southern shore of Sardinia to the opposite coast of Africa. Therefore when he heard that the French were sailing south, that is to say, were not attempting to weather the north of Corsica, he knew they could not reach Naples or Egypt without passing his line. They were making then for the Straits. He struggled after them: but the winds were foul and when he arrived at Gibraltar the only thing he knew for certain was that Villeneuve had gained a month's start. Had he concealed himself in some neighbouring port? Nelson examined with his own eyes Carthagen and Cadiz and Lisbon. Had he gone north to the English Channel or joined the fleet at Brest? Clearly no; for in less than a month news of this would have reached the Rock. What then? Was it Bombay or Barbados? To this alternative Nelson reduced his problem: reasoned it out thus clearly in a whirl of conflicting evidence that would have held nine men out of ten inactive and driven the tenth insane. And he made up his mind at once. In the West Indies British interests were more valuable and more vulnerable. Therefore to the West Indies he went: went in de-

fiance of the rule that forbade a Commander-in-Chief to leave his station ; went in defiance of the rule that bade the doubtful fall back on Cornwallis.

Villeneuve, fresh from port, with every aid to speed that a dock-yard could supply, crossed the Atlantic in thirty-four days. Nelson, who had maintained a strict blockade for the best part of two years, who all that time had kept his ships at sea without resort to an English base, who but recently had taken his crazy ships all the way to Egypt and back, crossed the Atlantic in twenty-four days, and this in spite of the "*Old Superb*".

The *Old Superb* was barnacled and green as grass below,  
Her sticks were only fit for stirring grog ;  
The pride of all her midshipmen was silent long ago,  
And long ago they ceased to heave the log.

But Captain Keats begged Nelson not to leave him behind, and Nelson had not the heart to refuse. For who did not honour the *Old Superb* ! Who had not heard how she played hobgoblin with two Spanish first-rates, inducing them to fight each other in the dark till both were destroyed by fire ; and she the while by the light of it was busy taking a third ! But she grew slower as they proceeded, and earned the execrations of the fleet. Time was everything : and she held them back. Really it was too absurd ! Why didn't the Admiral turn her round and send her waddling home ? The Admiral did write the *Superb* a letter, and this is what he said :—

VICTORY, May 19, 1805.

MY DEAR KEATS,

I am fearful that you may think the *Superb* does not go as fast as I could wish. However that may be, (for if we all went ten knots, I should not think it fast enough,) yet I would have you assured that I know and feel that the *Superb* does all which is possible for a ship to accomplish ; and I desire that you will not fret.

The man who could write such a letter might well work miracles.

As for Captain Keats "he obtained permission not to stop when other ships did, but always to carry a press of sail ; and he lashed his studding-sail booms to the yards, as the constant direction of the trade winds allows them to be carried steadily". So

Every night the *Old Superb* she sailed while others slept,  
Till we ran the French to earth with all the rest !

. . . . .

When Nelson arrived at Barbados Villeneuve was still at Martinique; but in the very act of setting out to raid the Leeward Islands. If Nelson had been guided by instinct alone it is almost certain that he would have come up with the foe in the very place where Rodney crushed De Grasse on the famous "Twelfth of April". It would have been a great battle; for there were twelve of the French, six of the Spaniards, and Nelson had in all but ten. His directions were simple. He bade his captains take a Frenchman apiece. He would manage the Spaniards himself. But the colonials, cruel in their wish to be kind, sent him off on a false trail. To anything like an ordinary rumour Nelson would not have lent a moment's credence. But here was unimpeachable testimony from the British general commanding at St. Lucia. The allied fleet, he reported, had gone south to Trinidad. So to Trinidad Nelson sailed; only to lose his labour and find the island unmolested. Without repining he turned again north to retrieve the mistake if he could. Antigua was safe and St. Kitts and Nevis. What had become of the allied fleet? Gone to Jamaica, said the wiseacres: but Nelson was not to be caught a second time. Learning that French soldiers had disembarked at Guadeloupe he instantly decided that Villeneuve had abandoned his enterprise and was already on his way to Europe. Without a moment's delay he turned to pursue and sent ahead the *Curieux* brig to warn the Admiralty.

The *Curieux* overtook Villeneuve and not only counted his numbers, but made a note of his latitude and longitude; then, resuming her journey, delivered her fateful news. The First Lord carefully scrutinized the reckoning and guessed that the allied fleet were making for Ferrol. He acted with a promptness and decision worthy of the crisis. At Ferrol there was a large Spanish fleet watched by a small one under Sir Robert Calder. The nearest British fleet was watching Rochefort. The First Lord ordered the whole of the Rochefort blockade, without the loss of a minute, to join Calder, and with him stand well out to sea on the Ferrol latitude. By this masterstroke he placed at Villeneuve's landfall a fleet little inferior to Villeneuve's own.

Sir Robert Calder was a man of distinguished talents, of unquestioned bravery, of undisputed skill. He had been brought up in a grand school, had been Jervis's captain at St. Vincent.

But he had not in him the fire of which heroes are made. He was not the man whom a crisis produces. He did not see that fate had made him master of the greatest naval campaign. He did not know that the history of England and of Europe paused to see what his answer would be. He did not see around him on his quarter-deck the shades of Drake and Blake, of Hawke and Albemarle. He met Villeneuve. He fought Villeneuve. And on technical grounds he defeated Villeneuve, for two Spanish ships fell to leeward from their wounds and Calder snapped them up and kept them. But, paradoxical as it may appear, he was not in reality victorious.

Villeneuve's object was to join his own fleet with the squadrons that Calder blockaded. He preferred, if it were possible, to do so without fighting. But he fought; and accomplished his purpose. After resting at Vigo he arrived at Ferrol. And Calder fell back on Cornwallis! Not Villeneuve, but himself was the challenger. Yet the action accomplished nothing but to force him back on the defensive. Rodney before The Saints and Howe before the Glorious First, each compelled his adversary to drop a ship or two. But not for a moment on that account did they consider their task at an end. Had either of them been in Calder's place he would have sunk the wretched prizes and compelled his foe to fight to the death.

"If only Nelson had been there!" men said.

And Nelson was so near and yet so far. Calder fought on 22nd July. On the 20th at Gibraltar Nelson went ashore; "the first time for two years wanting ten days". Though he had left the Indies days after Villeneuve he had arrived in Europe first. He was not shuddering for England's safety. He sought only to find the allied fleet and "give them a drubbing". So he threw himself in front of the Straits to head them off from Toulon. At Cadiz he found his old friend Collingwood,\* who had replaced Sir John Orde. There was no news to be had of the French, and Nelson, quite at the end of his resources, fell back on Cornwallis at Brest.

\* No one more than Collingwood had enjoyed the Amiens truce. He spent his time in gardening, in copying extracts from the best authors to improve his style and in walking about the country-side with a pocketful of acorns which he planted in every likely spot, that the Navy might never want oak-trees.

This then was the situation at the beginning of August. Napoleon with his legions was still at Boulogne. Villeneuve had linked the Toulon fleet with the Cadiz, and the Cadiz with the Ferrol. He had lost two ships, but still had twenty-nine. The Rochefort fleet of five were unwatched. They could join him when they liked.\* What was there to prevent him from sailing at once, as Napoleon wished, to the mouth of the Channel? The whole of the might of the British Navy had concentrated there. They were not playing blind-man's buff. They had not a moment's anxiety for an unlocated foe. They had thirty-eight stout ships of the line, many of them first-rates. Not for so much as a hair-breadth of time did Cornwallis expect the arrival of the allied fleet. He asked for nothing better, but he knew they would not come. Eleven of them were raw Spanish ships that had never set bowsprit out of harbour; the rest after a wearing journey had fetched Ferrol which had no supplies. And so at what appeared to landsmen the gravest conjuncture in Britain's history, when every ship should have been in the Channel, Cornwallis with his accustomed *sang-froid* proceeded to act as follows. He sent Nelson home for a rest; he sent the Old *Superb* into port to refit; and of the thirty-six vessels that remained he gave half to Calder, bidding him to go and try again; and half he kept himself. Some have condemned him for rashness. But a well-judged rashness was the mark of Billy Blue, and a campaign cannot be won without risks. It was about this time that Gantheaume, who had twenty sail to his flag, somewhat incautiously put his head out of Brest. Cornwallis literally punched it and the head apologetically withdrew.

Nelson, released by Cornwallis, returned home in the depths of depression. To his own view he had failed miserably enough. He had left his station without leave, crossed the Atlantic and missed his prey; recrossed the Atlantic and missed it again. What would his England say? Happily he had not long to wait. The people could not rightly see what it was that he had done: but ever before their eyes was the vision of a little man with a tiny force of ten ships chasing a fleet just twice the size round and round the world. He was so small and so frail: and he did such

\* Theoretically! Villeneuve sent the *Didon* to fetch them. But the *Didon* was captured by the *Phoenix* after one of the most splendid frigate actions on record.

wonderful things. They tried to cheer: and could not even do that, for the lump rose in their throats. So they wept instead; or knelt and asked his blessing as if he had been a saint. The Admiralty welcomed him effusively. Their barriers were broken down. They gave him their fullest confidence. They appreciated in the liveliest way his single-minded purpose for his country's good; they testified to his supreme strategic merit. And they were grateful to him. He had enabled them to resume their campaign without distraction. He had unmasked the plot of the Corsican Ogre, and pricked the bubble of the invasion scare.

At the end of August, Napoleon threw up his hand and marched away from Boulogne.

But though the Emperor neither waited nor very much cared to hear the further adventures of Villeneuve, in England the possibility of destroying the Allied Fleet remained the only topic of interest. The snake had been scotched. It must now be killed. On 1st September the *Euryalus* frigate dropped anchor in the Solent and Captain Blackwood hiring a chaise dashed for London at break-neck speed. On his way he called at Merton to tell Nelson his news. Villeneuve had avoided Sir Robert Calder and was once more out of port! Nelson followed his intelligencer to London\* and instantly offered his services. The news was not quite so good as at first it looked. Villeneuve, it seemed, had merely exchanged his base from Ferrol to Cadiz, where Calder's force had joined Collingwood and instantly shut him in. His move was almost certainly occasioned by nothing more than the lack in Ferrol of all facilities for re-equipping his fleet. But the Admiralty closed with Nelson's offer. To him belonged by prescriptive right the privilege of dealing once for all with the fleet of Napoleon the Great. The First Lord offered him every assistance, and handed him the Navy List with an invitation to choose what officers he liked. "Choose yourself, my Lord," said Nelson. "The same spirit actuates the whole service."

Nelson left Merton for the last time on the night of 13th September. Next morning early he arrived at Portsmouth and

\*It was during his visit to London that Nelson for the only time met Wellington. The two stood by chance in an ante-room waiting an audience with Lord Castlereagh: the sailor on his way to establish Britain's sea-power; the soldier, just returned from India, opportunely to work upon the basis of that sea-power for the deliverance of Europe from her scourge.

breakfasted at the "George". To escape the crowds he slipped out at the back into Penny Street, and, avoiding the usual place of embarkation, went down to the bathing machines. But the crowds were everywhere. They thronged and surged round him, not roughly and noisily but with tender reverence, as if they knew it was "Good-bye," and wanted not to shriek themselves hoarse but just to see his face once more. There was something unusual in the silent leave-taking of a great crowd. They gazed at him as he got into the boat: their gaze followed him as he rowed away. A little figure stood up and waved his hat to them: and still they waited and gazed. "I had their huzzas before," said Nelson. "Now I have their hearts."

Nelson joined the fleet on 29th September, his forty-seventh birthday. He had the *Euryalus* in company, and not desiring that Villeneuve should know of his arrival he sent her ahead to forbid any hoisting of colours or salute of guns. But Collingwood and his captains devised a token of their gladness that he was come. Nelson liked his ships to have two yellow streaks and black port-lids to chequer them. So when they knew that he was on his way, they all began with one accord to paint their ships "à la Nelson". "The reception I met with on joining the fleet," he wrote, "caused the sweetest sensation of my life. The officers who came on board to welcome my return forgot my rank as Commander-in-Chief in the enthusiasm with which they greeted me. . . . And when I came to explain to them the '*Nelson Touch*' it was like an electric shock."

The "*Nelson Touch*" was his battle-plan to defeat the Allied Fleet.

### CHAPTER III. THE BATTLE

Heard ye the thunder of battle,  
Low in the south and afar?  
Saw ye the flush of the death-cloud  
Crimson o'er Trafalgar?

—PALGRAVE.

The first business was to induce the allied fleet to come out of Cadiz. Dreading a repetition of the tedious blockade of Toulon, Nelson determined in the last extremity to enter the harbour and push them out. Meanwhile he blockaded the entire Andalusian coast to see what hunger would do. And he disposed his fleet in a decoy-blockade. The inshore squadron he replaced by a handful



of frigates under Captain Blackwood of the *Euryalus*; and the main body of the fleet he removed a considerable distance to the west. Between himself and the frigates he placed his fastest two-deckers so that he might keep the Allied Fleet in ignorance of his numbers and learn without a moment's delay any movement on Villeneuve's part.

Happily for his purpose, Napoleon also desired the Allied Fleet to leave Cadiz without delay. His immediate ambitions were not concerned with the Peninsula, but with Austria and Italy; and if the fleet was to co-operate with him, its place was the Mediterranean. He put his view before the Admirals, and Villeneuve called a Council of War. By this time it was known that Nelson was outside and the Council decided by a considerable majority that to shift its quarters to the Mediterranean would entail a risk out of all proportion to any advantage to be derived from the change. For Napoleon this could only mean one thing. Villeneuve was an arrant coward. Were all his plans then one after another to be thwarted by the caprices of a poltroon! With senseless fury he signed Villeneuve's recall and in hot haste dispatched a successor. The news of his disgrace reached Villeneuve on 18th October, and unable to endure the unmerited reproach, he resolved against his better judgment to put at once to sea. There was this to console him: news that Nelson had sent away to Gibraltar no less than six of the line.

The report was true enough. Nelson, unsuspecting of what was agitating Villeneuve's brain, and looking for no immediate movement, had sent a contingent to water and refit. Not only this; but the six included his most trusted captains, "Ben" Hallowell, Louis and others. He sent them first, because he wanted to make sure of their early return. Nor did this conclude the deductions from his fleet. So great had been the outcry against Calder that the Admiralty offered him the chance of clearing himself. He was eager to return and take his trial. Nelson had no love for him. But he considered that he had been despitefully used and, therefore, instead of sending him to England in a frigate, allowed him to return in his flagship, a vessel equal at least to a pair of seventy-fours.

This magnanimity was the more remarkable because Nelson desired that in the coming conflict the force at his disposal should

be something more than merely sufficient. The country, he argued, wanted not a gallant success in the face of odds but a crowning victory. "Only numbers can annihilate," he said. The Admiralty did their best and sent him reinforcements when they could. Among late arrivals was the old *Agamemnon* with Berry, his "Stormy Petrel" in command. Nelson's spirits rose with a bound. "Hurrah!" he cried. "Now we shall have a fight."

And so there were still twenty-seven of the line outside Cadiz on the day Villeneuve heard of his dismissal. But Villeneuve did not know this. They were out of sight and he could not count them. He knew there had been originally twenty-seven. Allowing for absentees he estimated that Nelson had twenty-one. From the contemplation of his own thirty-three he therefore derived a feeling not far from satisfaction.

He did not intend to offer battle unless compelled. But the contingency might arise. In preparing for it he had in his mind a vision of Aboukir. He made sure that Nelson's attack would be massed on his van or rear. To prevent this he divided the Allied Fleet into two squadrons. The larger under his own direction made up twenty-one sail so as to be exactly equal to the entire British force. The remaining twelve were constituted into a reserve, which by keeping to windward would be able to succour whatever part of the line was imperilled. Gravina, Commander-in-Chief of the Spaniards, took charge of them. He could be trusted to play his part with distinction, for ever since the days when he bombarded Gibraltar in an *Indestructible* his name had sounded the very echo of gallantry. Villeneuve's anticipations were shrewd and his dispositions sound. He made no attempt to group his ships by nationalities. French and Spaniards took station side by side.

It was Saturday, 19th October, when the first of them got to sea. Nelson had just invited "Coll" to dine with him. He cancelled the invitation by signal, and made all sail to the south-east to head the foe off the Straits. But only part of Villeneuve's force got to sea that day and Nelson came back again.

On Sunday the weather was abominable. It rained all the day long. But Nelson still kept in touch; and still kept out of sight. When evening fell he sent Blackwood word that a special effort was needed: and all night long British cruisers patrolled like

watchmen, while the enemy put them in mind of a London street with its long array of lamps. All through the night blue fires of his own invention told Nelson exactly what Villeneuve was doing; and move for move he turned his fleet about. Only the *Africa*, a little sixty-four, failed to keep her station in the line.

Monday, the famous 21st October, opened gloriously. The sky was cloudless, the breeze was light from west-north-west and the mighty ships were lifted along by a heavy rolling swell from the Atlantic. At daybreak the Britons saw the enemy, midway between them and the Andalusian shore some ten or twelve miles away. Nelson as ever was early on deck. He was dressed in his Admiral's frock-coat, bearing on the left breast four stars of different orders. For the first time he forgot his sword. He put it ready, but left it lying on his cabin-table. The drum beat to quarters;\* and he signalled his fleet to advance in order of sailing; that is to say, in two lines ahead, moving abreast of each other. His own line was the more northerly of the two and nearer the wind.

Much of the interest of Trafalgar lies in the fact that it was Nelson's first pitched battle. As the great master of naval warfare how did he propose to win a decisive victory against a mobile enemy in ordered array? The very essence of his plan was to mass his strength upon part only of the Allied Fleet. At the Nile he had clustered on the van; but (for obvious reasons) of a fleet in motion he preferred to attack the rear. To execute this manœuvre he considered it ridiculous to conform to custom, to draw up his line parallel to the enemy's and co-extensive with it. He did not condemn co-extension. Still less did he condemn parallelism. But he deemed a twelve hours' fighting-day too short for such delicate adjustment.

Therefore he subdivided his fleet into two squadrons. In doing so he departed entirely from precedent, for this subdivision must not be compared with Rodney's, when he put part of his fleet under the command of Hood; or Rooke's when he put part under Shovel. Nelson's two squadrons were to all intents and purposes entirely separate fleets, independent in their control and absolutely distinct in their functions. They must be considered separately.

"Squadron One" was intended primarily for destruction.

\* As in Drake's day. The bugle was not introduced until after Trafalgar.

Nelson had hoped to make it very strong, but his ships were few. He could only spare fifteen. These were to match themselves with the rearmost twelve of the enemy, retaining an advantage in numbers of twenty-five per cent. Their method of attack would be parallel. They would break the enemy's rear at all points in the manner prescribed by Lord Howe. Nelson handed over the command of them with hardly a reservation to Collingwood his lifelong friend, who at St. Vincent had so exactly interpreted what was in his mind, and battered the foe with so unanswerable a force.

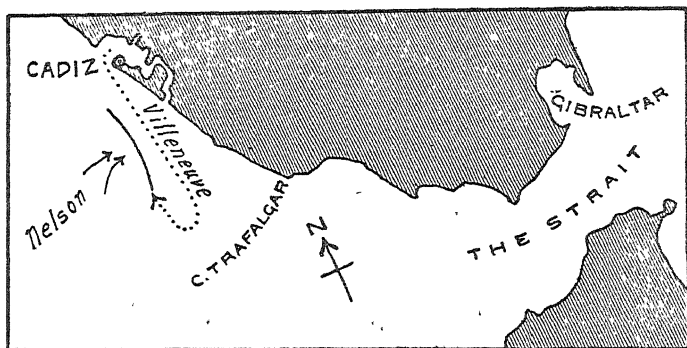
There was nothing new in an attack on the rear. Rodney had tried it at Martinique. But because it was known and because it had been tried, a counterstroke had been sought and long ago discovered. The remedy consisted in wearing the threatened fleet all together. Then the part imperilled became *ipso facto* the van, and the centre and rear astern of it moved up to its support. For this reason one thing was morally certain. Unless some new *motif* were introduced Villeneuve would experience no difficulty in parrying Collingwood's attack upon his rear.

Hence arose the need of "Squadron Two".

"Squadron Two," which Nelson designed for himself, had a supremely difficult task. It had to deal with the remainder of the fleet and prevent them from interrupting Collingwood's game or guessing where their danger lay. Nelson had given Collingwood fifteen ships. He had twelve left for himself; twelve to bewilder twenty-one. He asked for no more. If at the last moment he had received reinforcements, he would have given them to Collingwood. This was the first part of his duty. When he had confused the foe and paralysed their initiative, he intended to use his force in completing Collingwood's work and overpowering the hostile centre. He hoped to employ his twenty-seven ships on at most two-thirds of those opposed to him, neglecting their van altogether. If the scheme succeeded he hoped to take twenty ships. Everything depended on his little force of twelve. For Collingwood he had prescribed a definite attack; line abreast parallel to the foe. He left himself an entirely free hand, setting down no rule to bind him; to the end that he might deliver his attack as the need of the moment dictated.

As the English bore down, Villeneuve realized for the first time the mistake he had made in his estimate of their number. The

shock of the discovery threw him back on the strict defensive: and he signalled at once to Gravina to bring his detached squadron into line again. This step may have been necessary. It was certainly retrograde. It was a sacrifice of originality. Yet no one on the battle-field was clearer-headed than Villeneuve. He probably thought it unwise to abandon formal methods in the presence of such a master as Nelson. He considered next what his opponent intended to do, and with extraordinary judgment concluded that he intended to attack the allied rear. So at eight o'clock he ordered the prescribed remedy. He signalled the whole fleet to wear: a simultaneous movement, every ship going about at once. Under the circumstances no better plan could



CADIZ AND TRAFALGAR

have been devised. It was too early, perhaps, to guard him entirely from an attack which was as yet but partly developed. But there were other advantages. The fleet had been sailing southwards. By turning on the opposite tack he brought under his lee Cadiz to safeguard himself in the last extremity, and the shoals of Trafalgar to imperil his adversary. Furthermore, the difficulty of going about in light airs and on a heavy swell with the attempt of Gravina to merge himself in the regular array had the effect of throwing the combined fleet into a disorderly order; the ships not in single line ahead but in a more or less reduplicated line as De Ruyter's had been on 4th June, 1666. This was without doubt the best method of frustrating an attempt to break the line

in all places after the manner of Lord Howe. Indeed, some of the English sailors thought it must have been designed for the purpose.

Nelson was deceived by the manœuvre. He did not for a moment interpret it as a battle move. He jumped to the entirely wrong idea that Villeneuve was flying, and flying in disorder. Therefore he began his attack as Hawke had done at Quiberon; or rather he opened a double Quiberon attack like Duncan's at Camperdown; himself and Collingwood leading, while their respective squadrons formed up astern in order of speed.\*

The lightness of the breeze made the advance of the British necessarily slow in spite of their efforts. During this interval Nelson visited the decks. He went slowly from gun to gun, finding everywhere some cheery word of praise or encouragement. The men, great sturdy fellows, most of them, were stripped to the waist; with handkerchiefs ready to bind over their ears the moment that firing began. They stood to attention and tugged their forelocks when Admiral "Nel" came along. The utmost joy prevailed at the thought of battle. The bands played "Hearts of Oak" and "Britons, strike home". Every ship at Nelson's orders had at least three flags, a white ensign and two Union Jacks.

About eleven o'clock Lieutenant Pasco, signal lieutenant of the *Victory*, went on a matter of business to Nelson's cabin. He came in quietly, and found the Admiral on his knees,—writing. He withdrew at once, but afterwards they found the paper just as the Admiral had left it. And this is what Nelson wrote :—

May the Great God, whom I worship, grant to my Country and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory; and may no misconduct in any one tarnish it; and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet. For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him who made me, and may His blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my Country faithfully. To him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend. Amen. Amen. Amen.

\* The resemblance to Camperdown ends here. Duncan approached in two columns because that arrangement had recently been adopted as the normal order of sailing, and he would not stop to deploy. But there was with him no conscious division into two fleets, each with its own separate functions. Nelson gratefully acknowledged that he had studied Camperdown with advantage: but then he skilfully wove into his masterpiece all the good ideas of the past.

After writing this he went on deck and mounting the poop ordered certain signals to be made. And about a quarter to twelve he said, "Mr. Pasco, I wish to say to the fleet, ENGLAND CONFIDES THAT EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY"; and he added: "You must be quick, for I have one more to make, which is for close action". Pasco replied: "If your Lordship will permit me to substitute *Expects* for *Confides*, the signal will soon be completed, because the word *Expects* is in the vocabulary but *Confides* must be spelled". Nelson replied in haste and with seeming satisfaction: "That will do, Pasco; make it directly".

The signal was greeted with a shout of answering acclamation. Nelson then ordered that for "Close Action" to be hoisted to the top-gallant masthead and kept flying. This done, he turned to Blackwood (who early in the morning had come aboard for instructions) and said: "Now I can do no more. We must trust to the great Disposer of all events and to the justice of our cause. I thank God for this great opportunity of doing my duty."

When not otherwise engaged, Nelson kept a close watch upon the enemy. About the middle of the morning, when they were yet some three miles away, he turned to Blackwood with one of his eager exclamations. "They put a good face on it!" he said. The remark was occasioned by the discovery that Villeneuve was after all not running away. So far from running he had hove to, and was calmly amending his line. This then, if any, was the moment to deploy; to abandon the Hawke-like winging and get into "Line Abreast". There is no doubt that it was Nelson's original intention to do so. But with one of the inspirations that came to him time and again in moments of stress he resolved to keep on in line ahead. With unmistakable clearness he saw that this was the ideal way to keep the enemy in suspense. For what would his advance mean to them? He might at the last deploy on their van. He might deploy on their centre. He might cut through in Rodney fashion and pass along their centre. He might cut through in Rodney fashion and pass along their van. He would not commit himself irrevocably to any project. And if he did not know himself what he was going to do, how should the enemy know? In this way he would keep them inactive to the last, and "Coll" would do his business undisturbed.

If Nelson had survived Trafalgar nothing would have amused

him more than the efforts of those who strove to prove that the perpendicular attack was the greatest discovery of his genius, the tactical panacea. At St. Vincent, the Nile and Copenhagen he had accepted mighty risks, but nothing approaching this, the last and mightiest risk of all. Theoretically, it meant absolute and inevitable destruction, not only for himself, not only for the *Victory*, but for the whole of the squadron he commanded. They would come into action one by one, while the enemy defiling past would pile up strength in a solid mass and rake them out of existence.

Those that gathered round Villeneuve were the bravest of the brave. They were worthy to have fought with Brueys at the Nile, or shared with their countrymen in any of the triumphs of Napoleon. Villeneuve reminded them of what their Emperor expected. "Any captain," so ran his last signal, "any Captain who is not under fire, is out of his station!" As for the Spaniards they were worthy of Oquendo. Captain Churruca of the *Nepomuceno* sent this last message to his family: "If you hear that my ship has been taken, then you will know that I am dead".

How then did Nelson dare this last daring?

It should surprise no one to hear that though he adopted the perpendicular attack on the very battlefield, yet he had in advance made careful preparations to minimize its peril. In the first place he had put at the head of his line a cluster of three-deckers, *Victory*, *Temeraire*, and *Neptune*. He believed that these could at least for a time stand up against any odds that the allied fleet could bring against them. And that the time might not be too long either under fire as they approached, or without succour when engaged, he dispensed with the customary battle-rig, and set all courses, with topsails, top-gallants, royals and studding-sails.

Yet for all that the risk was stupendous. All on board the *Victory* were very sensible of this and betrayed the utmost anxiety for their chief. They tried to persuade each other to ask him to cover his decorations or wear some other coat. But nobody could be induced to approach him on this head. "In honour I gained them," he had said at the Nile, "and in honour I will die with them." Captain Blackwood, however, ventured to invite him to forsake the *Victory* and conduct the battle by signal from the *Euryalus*. It was a feasible plan and kindly meant. Nelson

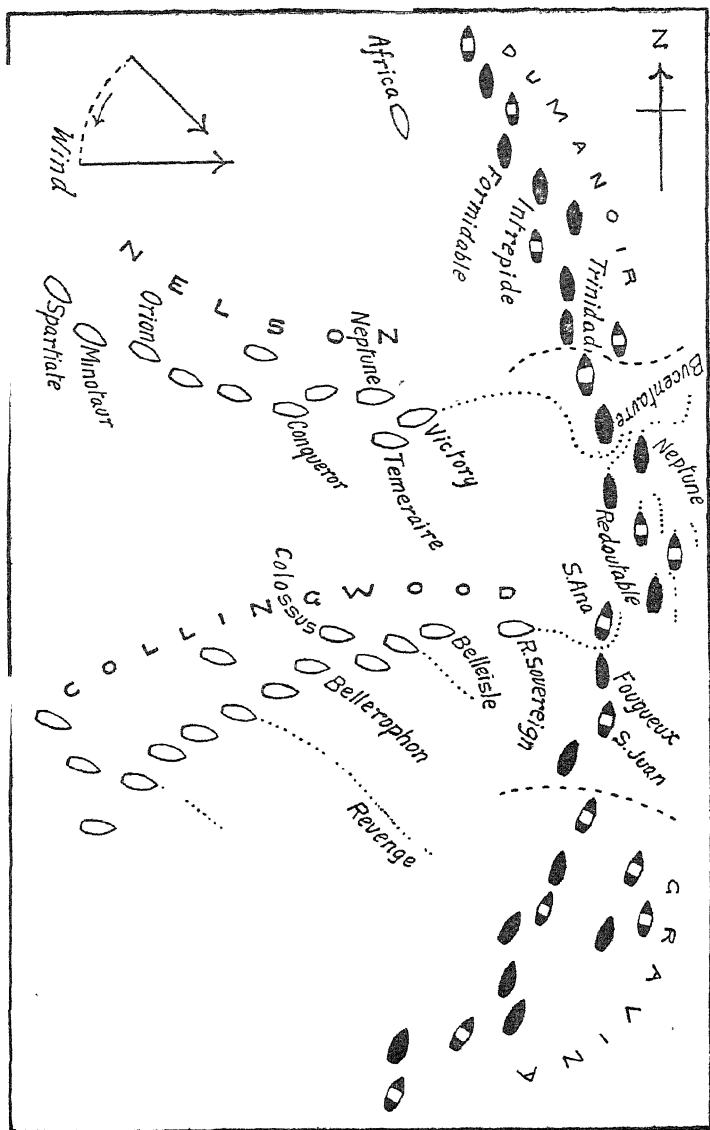


would none of it. Then Blackwood asked that the *Temeraire* might lead the line in the *Victory's* place. Perhaps Nelson prided himself that the *Temeraire* could not overhaul him. He smiled at Hardy, and consented. Blackwood with his lungs of brass gave the order and the *Temeraire*, who was flying light, began to draw up level. Nelson stepped up to the poop, and speaking as he always did with a slightly nasal intonation called out: "I'll trouble you, Captain Harvey, to keep your place, which is *astarn* of the *Victory*".

It must not be thought that Nelson alone was insensible of the danger: or that he was carried away by the excitement of the moment. What he did, he did with his eyes open, and because he deemed it necessary. The pace of the *Victory* in spite of her sky-scrapers was slow. As they drew into the danger-zone the enemy fired single shots to find the range. The sixth of these flew through the main top-gallant sail. It was time for Blackwood to be gone. Nelson gave him his last instructions: bade him pass down the line, speak each vessel and tell her to get into battle as best she could. The favourite frigate-captain bidding his master adieu, expressed the hope that in a few hours he would be back to congratulate him on twenty prizes. Nelson wrung his hand. "God bless you, Blackwood," he said. "I shall never speak to you again."

. . . . .  
When Nelson sailed for Trafalgar  
With all his country's best,  
He held them dear as brothers are,  
But one beyond the rest.

Collingwood was early astir on the morning of Trafalgar and began the day by disproving the old adage that no man is a hero to his valet. His servant calling him at dawn found the Admiral already half-dressed. Collingwood asked him if he had seen the combined fleet and placed him in a good position. The sight was magnificent, but what amazed the servant as he looked was the entirely calm way in which his master went on shaving. Shortly afterwards Clavell, his first lieutenant, paid him a visit. Collingwood said: "You had better put on silk stockings as I have done; for if one should get a shot in the leg they would be so much more manageable for the surgeon". After he had visited



THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR  
October 21, 1805

the decks he turned to his officers and exclaimed: "Now, gentlemen, let us do something to-day which the world may talk of hereafter".

Quite early in the morning, Collingwood signalled to his squadron to take order in *line abreast*. But as they proceeded to obey, he found himself confronted with a difficulty. According to the prescribed plan it was his part to open the attack. It was his part to deliver trenchant blows while Nelson made use of artifice. Yet here was Nelson dashing ahead; minded, it would seem, to leave him behind. Collingwood thought for a moment what he should do; came to a decision; and dashed impetuously forward very much as Nelson was doing. His risk, if anything, was greater; for there was at the head of his line no fiery nucleus as there was in the windward squadron. But Collingwood stayed not to think of this. Indeed of his own doing he increased his peril. His fifteen ships were to be matched with the enemy's rearmost twelve. He steered for the *Fougueux*. She was in a sense twelfth from the tail. But there were three of Gravina's to leeward. And when he came near enough to see that the ship ahead of the *Fougueux* was a Spanish flag-ship and a three-decker Collingwood found her attraction too alluring. So he steered instead for the *Santa Ana* and in so doing matched his fifteen sail not with twelve ships but sixteen. What is more, the *Royal Sovereign* was fresh from England. She was newly coppered. And when studding-sails were set and every reef shaken out she flew ahead like a frigate, leaving every one behind. This, of course, was hardly carrying out the pre-arranged scheme; not, at least, in a literal sense: Many another Commander-in-Chief would have been greatly annoyed. From the quarter-deck of the *Victory*, Nelson observed the technical disobedience. "See how that noble fellow Collingwood takes his ship into action," he said.

The *Fougueux* began the battle. She fired the first shot and as she did so Collingwood made all his men lie down on deck beside their guns. The *Fougueux* made the first defensive move. She closed up to prevent the line from being pierced. This was pointed out to Collingwood. "Steer straight for the Frenchman," he said, "and take his bowsprit." The *Fougueux* backed a top-sail to prevent collision and soon after twelve o'clock the *Royal Sovereign* broke the enemy's line. "Broke" is wanting in ex-

pressiveness here. She poured into the stern of the *Santa Ana* a double-shotted treble-shotted broadside. Mighty though her antagonist was, it shook her frame from keel to truck. "It seemed to smash everything," the Spaniards said. Fourteen guns were dismounted at the blow and 400 men wounded or killed.

Once through the gap the *Royal Sovereign* was surrounded on all sides. No less than five of the enemy engaged her at once. There was the *Santa Ana* on one side and the *Fougueux* on another: and three other ships somewhat ahead wore round and engaged her to leeward. Yet as Collingwood set himself down to the luxury of being destroyed he exclaimed with appreciative gratitude and pride: "What would not Nelson give to be here!"

So far had he been in advance of the rest that for twenty minutes at least he was unsupported. As soon as he was through he starboarded his helm, thinking to draw up to leeward of the Spaniard. Admiral Alava had foreseen this and prepared an immense reception. When the *Royal Sovereign* received it she heeled two strakes out of the water. The *Fougueux*, too, was well placed. She bore up and raked the *Sovereign's* stern. And the three to leeward plied their shot so quickly that some of Collingwood's met them in mid-air and fell flattened into the sea. Yet the British ship fought on. Far from feeling herself outnumbered she hoped to establish a record and capture a flag from the enemy before another British ship opened fire.

In this, the greatest moment of his life, Collingwood retained his wonted calm and homely attitude. He walked the break of the poop munching an apple; or sighted a quarter-deck gun himself lest the shot should be wasted from undue excitement. In the very thick of the fray a top-gallant studding-sail came down and lay hanging over the hammocks. Collingwood summoned Clavell to his side and with his assistance folded it. Then he placed it carefully in one of the boats. It might be wanted another day, he said; and, if left, would have fallen overboard.\* Meanwhile the number of wounded mounted quickly. Among others the Master

\* "Old Cuddie's" economy of stores was a byword through the fleet. There was a story, doubtless invented, that he offered the following advice to a captain recently promoted: "Now, sir, that you command a ship of your own, I recommend you strongly to keep your tea and sugar under lock and key".

fell. Collingwood knelt beside him and supporting the wounded man's head upon his shoulder whispered to him words of comfort till assistance came. But the Master was wounded to death and knew it. He only minded dying, he faltered, because he would not be able to read about the victory in the papers. In such a bloody fray, Collingwood himself could not escape. A wound in the foot enabled him to prove that he was right about silk stockings. But with his usual modesty he omitted to mention his injury, so that the fact is not generally known.

The *Royal Sovereign* did not compass her ambition, but she drove off the *Fougueux*: and as three of her antagonists being on the opposite tack could not long retain their place she was able, by the time relief came, to devote the whole of her energies to the *Santa Ana*. The Spanish ship towered above her like a castle; but after an hour's fight the *Sovereign* knocked the mizen out of her: and at 2.15 sent fore and main by the board. Then Admiral Alava hauled down his flag and sent an officer to make submission. The Spaniard asked to what ship he surrendered. He was told, "The *Royal Sovereign*". "*The Royal Sovereign!*" he exclaimed. "Say rather 'The Royal Devil!'"

It might be supposed from the nature of his attack that Collingwood had entirely changed the office of his squadron and their method of engaging as prescribed by Nelson. This would be an entirely wrong impression. His leadership supplied all that was necessary. By his early signal he showed that he required the "Line Abreast". By rushing ahead he intimated plainly that the need for instant engagement must not be sacrificed to the trimmings of picturesque symmetry. In the "Nelson Touch" there was a special clause for the bewildered. "In case signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood *no captain can do wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy.*" But Collingwood's captains were not bewildered. They never doubted what they had to do. An accidental circumstance assisted them. Just about the time that Villeneuve hove to, the wind backed from north-west to west and caused the enemy's line to sag in the centre. Their formation presented in Collingwood's words "a crescent convexing to leeward". In consequence all their rearmost ships were abaft the *Sovereign's* beam and handy to come to for those that followed her. In his dispatch Collingwood is careful to say that

the ships succeeding him broke through the line at all parts. And the net result may be gauged from two very eloquent facts. Nine of his fifteen ships, no less, were engaged within half an hour of the firing of the *Fougueux's* opening broadside. And the *Revenge*, ninth ship in the order, was at work within ten minutes of the *Sovereign*, although for double that length of time the *Sovereign* fought alone and unsupported.

The ship that came to Collingwood's aid was the *Belleisle*. She was a fast ship. Earlier in the day she had been ordered ahead to serve as second to the Admiral. She passed the *Tonnant* on her way. "A glorious day for Old England," her captain called out. "We shall have one apiece before night." The *Belleisle* played a magnificent part in the hottest of the battle. At one time or another she was engaged by eight or nine of the enemy; the *Santa Ana*, the *Fougueux*, the three that wore round upon the *Sovereign* and others that came up from astern. She and she alone of the British fleet was reduced to a sheer hulk. She lost her mizen, her main, her fore and her bowsprit. But she nailed one flag to the stump of a mast, while another was fastened to a handspike and waved continuously. In time relief came to her. The *Swiftsure* and the *Defiance* raced each other to bring it: and as one of them went ahead, the other one cheered her on.

The *Belleisle* was battered and bruised and crushed: but she had her one before night!

It would have been strange if the old *Bellerophon* had not found a warm corner somewhere. The "Ruffians" wrote "Death or Glory" on their guns and went to look for it. Collingwood's signals were acknowledged by John Franklin, afterwards known to all the world as the heroic Arctic explorer. The warm corner was found: and the Captain killed. But the ship was splendidly fought by Lieutenant Cumby, author of that travesty the "Image of Blue and Gold". The *Bellerophon* snuggled herself cosily into a nest of five furious foes. She fought them alone as long as she could, and when assisted captured two of them.

And yet neither *Belleisle* nor *Bellerophon* had the longest casualty list: but the *Colossus*.

It is evident that Collingwood's mode of attack brought the ships into action not altogether as in line abreast, nor one after the other, as in line ahead. Those that were fastest were in

action first and, according to the text-books, should have been overwhelmed by numbers. Thanks to the spirit of Nelson that animated them they were not overwhelmed, and their slower comrades pressing on behind were enabled by hunting in twos and threes to rectify the swinging balance; to bring help where help was sorest needed or complete a conquest that hung in doubt.

. . . . .

It was part of the gigantic task that Nelson set himself to pierce the very heart of the enemy, to take Villeneuve, to put the *Bucentaure* out of action, and so paralyse initiative in the combined fleet. But as he bore down, the enemy showed no colours. It was impossible to guess which the flagship was. Therefore at first he made for his old acquaintance the *Santissima Trinidad*. She at least was unmistakable. When, however, the *Fougueux* opened fire the enemy broke their flags at the masthead and the *Bucentaure* stood revealed. Here, then, was the mark for Nelson. Without hesitation he ported his helm and steered for the little gap that showed between the Spanish flagship and the French.

Already as she moved into range the *Victory* had drawn upon herself such a fire as never battleship before sustained. The enemy, by single shots, early finding her distance, proceeded to discharge a very deluge, enfilading her without compunction as she coolly chose her point of attack. At 500 yards her mizen topmast went. A minute later her wheel was knocked to pieces. Nelson steered the ship from the gunroom and proceeded slowly and silently. A double-headed shot killed eight marines on the poop. He distributed the rest at intervals: and so onwards without reply. The foresail was slashed to ribbons. The fore top-sail was like nothing so much as a grating. Still the *Victory* fired not a round. Her studding-sails were shorn away. Fifty men fell on her upper deck. And still without answer she moved on: so silent, there might have been no soul on board. In all his experience, Nelson said, he had never seen ship's company under such self-control. To the enemy the *Victory* seemed like some phantom, unassailable by mortal men; the mute, slow-footed minister of Fate.

Villeneuve strove valiantly to save his line. He pushed up the *Bucentaure* upon the starboard quarter of the *Trinidad* locking

the two links of his chain. It was impossible to drive a wedge between. So the *Victory* turned on the opposite tack, exploring the avenue of fire. As Hardy and Nelson paced the quarter-deck a shot passed between them and a splinter bruised Hardy's foot and tore the buckle from his shoe. Each looked anxious for a moment, thinking the other wounded. "This is too warm work to last long," said Nelson.

Villeneuve's second astern, the *Neptune*, was out of her station, but the *Redoutable* pushed up so near that her bowsprit touched the *Bucentaure's* taffrail. Even here, then, there was no passage: not, at least, Hardy remarked, without a collision. "I cannot help that," said Nelson: "go on board which you please. Take your choice."

So they put the helm over to starboard and passed under Villeneuve's stern at grazing-distance.

Then at last the *Victory* spoke.

First she discharged from her fo'c'sle a 68-pounder carronade slap into the *Bucentaure's* stern windows. The horrible weapon, loaded with a keg of 500 musket-bullets, belched forth death along the decks. And then each gun of the *Victory's* broadside just as it came into position was discharged with rhythmical accuracy into the very weakest point of the doomed French flag-ship. Not one missed her mark. The effect was staggering. More than 400 men and twenty guns took no further part in the fight.

It was Nelson's intention to engage the *Bucentaure* from to-leeward until she submitted. But this design was frustrated by the *Redoutable*, who fouled the *Victory* the moment she was through. The *Redoutable* was burning to fight; but her captain, Lucas, knew better than to match his ship with Nelson's in an artillery duel: He let down his lower-deck port-lids. He put his picked men in his tops. And as the *Victory* with guns below tore her opponent to pieces, the picked men emptied her upper deck with langridge, musketry and hand-grenades. They emptied the poop, swept the gangways, cleared the fo'c'sle, and save for the towering figure of Hardy left scarce an officer untouched. Among the first the Admiral sank in his blood to the deck.

Lucas, of the *Redoutable*, now resolved to carry the *Victory* by boarding. For a time he was balked by the chasm that gaped between the ships as they ground their channels together. But he



cut the supports of the mainyard and used the spar as a bridge. Over this perilous aerial causeway his men made a rush, clinging and swarming and scrambling and pushing. Now with a shout of triumph one would drop on the *Victory's* deck : now with a howl of rage one would miss his footing and plunge into the abyss. On they came and Hardy was compelled to call men from the gun-decks to repel them. A fierce battle took place about the bulwarks. Blood flowed freely. Many were killed on either side. And then, just at the psychological moment, the unexpected happened.

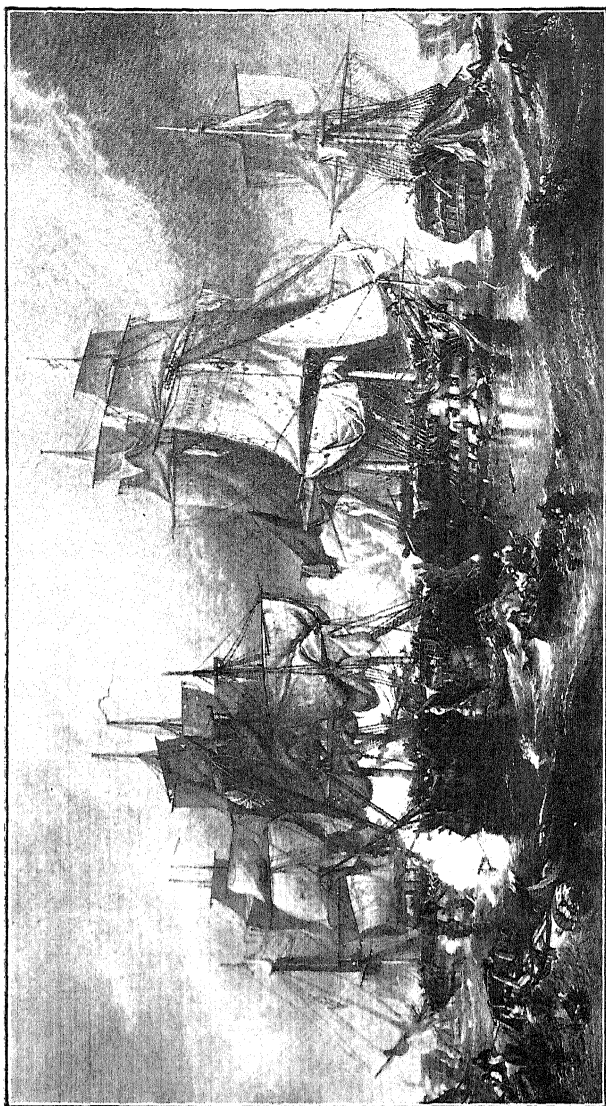
The *Temeraire* had followed very close astern of the *Victory*. Her courses, like the *Victory's*, had been riddled, and in breaking the line she was raked by the French *Neptune*.\* So serious was her damage that it brought her to a premature standstill : a sad plight surely and grievous for the hardest hitter in the fleet. But as she waited, the *Redoutable*, clutched by and clutching the *Victory*, unconscious of all but the effort to board, bore down on her larboard beam. The Frenchman's bowsprit passed over her gangway, and the *Temeraire*, blessing the good chance, lashed it firmly to her own main rigging. Then having tucked her adversary's head thus firmly under her arm, she lashed out with all her larboard guns for victory, vengeance and Nelson. There was the most hideous crash, and it was as if all had come down at once, masts and ropes and spars and rigging and sails and blocks and flags.

Yet praise where praise is due ! The *Redoutable* fought as splendidly as ever fought ship at sea. She was but a seventy-four. She was fighting now with two of England's noblest first-rates. The *Victory* lost her mizen ; the *Temeraire* all her topmasts : but the *Redoutable* lost her main, her mizen, her foretop, her bowsprit, and rudder. The *Victory* and *Temeraire* lost in all 282 men. This figure was equal to the total loss of all the rest of the squadron together. But the *Redoutable*, out of 643 men lost 522. Little wonder that Napoleon conferred upon Lucas the cross of the Legion of Honour.

While the *Temeraire* was reducing the *Redoutable*, a new fighter crept cunningly upon the scene. This was the *Fougueux*. She

\* Each nationality had a *Neptune* at Trafalgar ; English, French and Spanish.





TRAFALGAR. By Clarkson Stanfield

We are looking towards the west of south. The *Victory* in the forefront of the picture is easily recognized. Her mizen topmast is gone and her studding sails are shorn away. But her royals give her still a very stately appearance. To the left is the *Temeraire* with an antagonist on either side. The *Fouché* has just come up to starboard and is receiving her unexpected broadside. The *Victory* is already at her last gasp. She has only her foremast standing and her wreckage lies like a bridge athwart the *Temeraire*. Stanfield was a sailor, but meeting with an accident, was invalided from the service. He is unquestionably the best British

had already played a prominent part in the battle round Collingwood. Now passing from rear to van she espied fresh chance of mischief. The *Temeraire*, fully engaged on one side, was completely exposed on the other. It was the work of a moment to call away boarders and distribute small arms from the lockers. All was soon ready: and the eager spirits sprang into the rigging. There was no sign that the *Temeraire* suspected.

Suspected! Captain Harvey was waiting for them! He had manned and loaded his starboard guns and prepared a special reception. The *Fougueux* came up with ringing cries of "Vive L'Empereur!" "A l'abordage!" But Captain Harvey lifted his hand. "Stand by 'Temeraires'! Now, — fire!" One blow was enough. They lashed the *Fougueux* to their spare anchor as they had lashed the *Redoutable*. Twenty-nine "Temeraires" boarded the *Fougueux* and hauled Britain's colours aloft. Then they turned again to the *Redoutable* and finding a pathway over her wreckage hauled her flag down as well. This done with a prize under either arm, not merely taken but shackled in handcuffs, the *Temeraire* looked about for other victims and opened what guns she could squeeze into action on the *Santissima Trinidad*.

Oh! to see the linstock lighting,  
    *Téméraire! Téméraire!*  
Oh! to hear the round shot biting,  
    *Téméraire! Téméraire!*  
Oh! to see the linstock lighting,  
And to hear the round shot biting,  
For we're all in love with fighting,  
    On the *Fighting Téméraire*.\*

The *Bucentaure* and her seconds fought with desperate gallantry; not merely because they were gallant and brave, nor because the Emperor expected it. To prevent their line from being broken they made their extraordinary rally. They strained and struggled; struggled and strained. They succeeded in their self-appointed task. Their line was not broken as De Grasse's was in 1782. But then Nelson's plan was not what they conceived. He cared

\* The grand old ship having done all that she could was in 1838 sold out of the service to be broken up. Happily, as she was tugged to her last berth, she was seen on an autumn evening in the Thames by J. M. W. Turner and inspired the picture which has made at least her name familiar.

not a pin for breaking their line in symmetrical line ahead. His only plan was to conceal his plan: that in so doing he might take their Commander-in-Chief; secure Collingwood from interruption; and mass the whole of his twenty-seven ships on but twenty-two of their own.

It is needless to say that he did all that he desired. Under the open vault of heaven, in full view of the foe he kept his projects as darkly hidden as ever General with valleys and forest and hills; rivers, marshes and rising ground. And all his expected consequences followed to a nicety.

The vessels astern of the *Temeraire* completed their leader's work. They entirely neglected their enemy's van and hurled themselves with crushing force upon his centre. The *Neptune* was third of Nelson's first-rates. Captain Fremantle, her commander, a veteran of Teneriffe, first gave the *Bucentaure* her *coup de grace* and leaving her to surrender to Captain Pellew of the *Conqueror*,\* pushed on to the *Trinidad*. Here he found the *Africa* who had lost touch with the fleet on the previous night. Fearing what Nelson would think of her, the penitent had passed from the extreme north of the battlefield and receiving the fire of ship after ship had ended by challenging the only four-decker afloat, though herself a wee sixty-four. Others came up in time to complete the conquest, and when Captain Codrington of the *Orion* worked his way to the front the hostile centre had ceased to exist. Therefore, with a wisdom that in after years found a completer phrase at Navarino, he turned his ship to Collingwood's side to finish the business there.

## THE DEATH OF NELSON†

Thank God, I have done my duty.

"Lord Nelson was walking the quarter-deck with Captain Hardy and in the act of turning near the hatchway with his face

\* Villeneuve would have shifted his flag, but there was not a boat left. There was not a mast left either, nor yet an officer on the quarter-deck except himself.

† The account given here (slightly abridged) is from the AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE of Dr. Beatty, Surgeon to the *Victory*. His book was first published in 1807, and provides the *only* incontestable evidence upon the closing scene in the cockpit.

towards the stern of the *Victory*, when the fatal ball was fired from the enemy's mizen top.\* The ball struck the epaulette on his left shoulder, and penetrated his chest. He fell with his face on the deck.

"Captain Hardy expressed a hope that he was not severely wounded, to which the gallant Chief replied: 'They have done for me at last, Hardy'.

" 'I hope not,' answered Captain Hardy.

" 'Yes,' replied his Lordship, 'my backbone is shot through.'

"Captain Hardy ordered the seamen to carry the Admiral to the Cockpit. While the men were carrying him down the ladder from the middle deck, his Lordship observed that the tiller ropes were not yet replaced, and desired one of the Midshipmen to go upon the quarter-deck and remind Captain Hardy that new ones should be immediately rove. Having delivered this order, he took his handkerchief from his pocket and covered his face with it, that he might be conveyed to the Cockpit at this crisis unnoticed by the crew.

"The Surgeon had just examined two officers and found that they were dead, when his attention was arrested by several of the wounded calling to him, 'Mr. Beatty, Lord Nelson is here: Mr. Beatty, the Admiral is wounded'.

"The Surgeon, on looking round, saw the handkerchief fall from his Lordship's face; when the stars on his coat, which also had been covered by it, appeared. Mr. Burke, the purser, and the Surgeon ran immediately to the assistance of his Lordship; and took him from the arms of the Seamen who had carried him below. In conveying him to one of the Midshipmen's berths, they stumbled, but recovered themselves without falling.

"His Lordship was laid upon a bed, stripped of his clothes, and covered with a sheet.

"The Surgeon then examined the wound, assuring his Lordship that he would not put him to much pain in endeavouring to discover the course of the ball; which he soon found had penetrated deep into the chest, and had probably lodged in the spine.

\* After Nelson had left the deck a midshipman called Pollard, stationed on the *Victory's* poop, picked up a musket and with steady and deliberate aim emptied the *Redoubtable's* mizen top. The last man attempted to descend but Pollard picked him off in the rigging.

This being explained to his Lordship, he replied, 'he was confident his back was shot through'. The back was then examined externally but without any injury being perceived; on which his Lordship was requested by the Surgeon to make him acquainted with all his sensations. He replied, that 'he felt a gush of blood every minute within his breast: that he had no feeling in the lower part of his body: and that his breathing was difficult and attended with very severe pain about that part of the spine where he was confident that the ball had struck: for,' said he, 'I felt it break my back'.

"These symptoms, but more particularly the gush of blood which his Lordship complained of, together with the state of his pulse, indicated to the Surgeon the hopeless situation of the case; but till after the victory was ascertained and announced to his Lordship, the true nature of his wound was concealed by the Surgeon from all on board except only Captain Hardy.\*

"Many messages were sent to Captain Hardy by the Surgeon, requesting his attendance on his Lordship; who became impatient to see him, and often exclaimed: 'Will no one bring Hardy to me? He must be killed. He is surely destroyed.'

"The Captain's aide-de-camp, Mr. Bulkley, came below and stated that 'circumstances respecting the fleet required Captain Hardy's presence on deck; but that he would avail himself of the first favourable moment to visit his Lordship'.

"An hour and ten minutes however elapsed from the time of his Lordship's being wounded, before Captain Hardy's first subsequent interview with him; the particulars of which are nearly as follow.

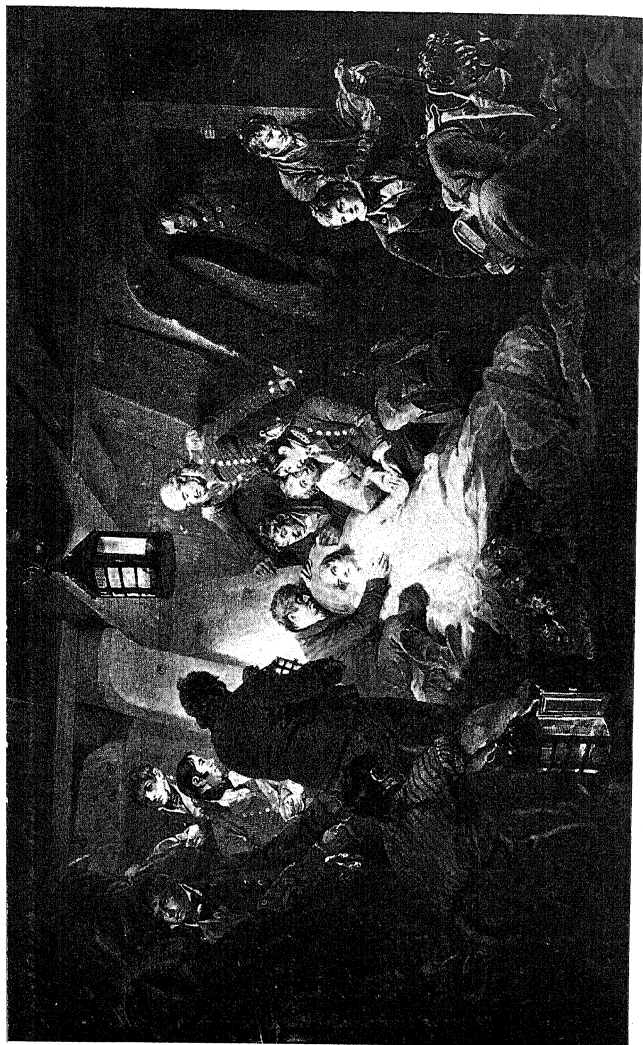
"They shook hands affectionately, and Lord Nelson said: 'Well, Hardy, how goes the battle? How goes the day with us?'

" 'Very well, my Lord,' replied Captain Hardy. 'We have

\* The ball struck the fore part of the epaulette and entered the left shoulder. It grazed the shoulder-blade, fractured the second and third ribs and in passing through the lung severed a branch of the artery. Then it fractured the backbone in two places, wounded the spinal cord and lodged in the muscles of the back. On removing the ball a portion of the gold lace and pad of the epaulette together with a scrap of the coat were found firmly attached to it as if inserted into the metal in a state of fusion. Under the injury done to his back, Nelson might have lived two or three days, but the severed artery hastened his death by internal hæmorrhage.







# THE DEATH OF NELSON

Dr. Scott, Nelson's chaplain, and Mr. Burke, purser of the *Victory*, support the bed under Nelson's shoulders. Dr. Scott rubs the Admiral's breast. Dr. Beatty holds his wrist. Nelson's faithful steward tries to find some trace of hope in the surgeon's face. Captain Hardy has just come in and bends over the group.

Devils, the artist, spent three weeks on board the *Victory* making studies for this most trustworthy picture.

got twelve or fourteen of the enemy's ships in our possession; but five of their van have tacked, and show an intention of bearing down upon the *Victory*. I have therefore called two or three of our fresh ships round us, and have no doubt of giving them a drubbing.'

" 'I hope,' said his Lordship, 'none of *our* ships have struck, Hardy.'

" 'No, my Lord,' replied Captain Hardy; 'there is no fear of that.'

" Lord Nelson then said: 'I am a dead man, Hardy. I am going fast: it will be all over with me soon. Come nearer to me . . .' Mr. Burke was about to withdraw at the commencement of this conversation; but his Lordship, perceiving his intention, desired he would remain.

" Captain Hardy observed, that 'he hoped Mr. Beatty could yet hold out some prospect of life'.

" 'Oh! no!' answered his Lordship; 'it is impossible. My back is shot through. Beatty will tell you so.'

" Captain Hardy then returned on deck, and at parting shook hands again with his revered friend and Commander.

" His Lordship now requested the Surgeon to return to the wounded; and give his assistance to such of them as he could be useful to; 'for,' said he, 'you can do nothing for me'.

" The Surgeon replied: 'My Lord, unhappily for our Country, nothing can be done for you;' and having made this declaration he was so much affected, that he turned round and withdrew a few steps to conceal his emotions.

" His Lordship said: 'I know it. I feel something rising in my breast,' putting his hand on his left side, 'which tells me I am gone.' Drink was recommended liberally, and Dr. Scott and Mr. Burke fanned him with paper.

" He often exclaimed, 'God be praised, I have done my duty'; and upon the Surgeon's inquiring whether his pain was still very great, he declared, 'it continued so very severe, that he wished he was dead. Yet,' said he in a lower voice, 'one would like to live a little longer, too.'

" Captain Hardy now came to the Cockpit to see his Lordship a second time, which was after an interval of about fifty minutes from the conclusion of his first visit.

"Lord Nelson and Captain Hardy shook hands again: and while the Captain retained his Lordship's hand, he congratulated him even in the arms of Death on his brilliant victory; 'which,' he said, 'was complete;' though he did not know how many of the Enemy were captured, as it was impossible to perceive every ship distinctly. He was certain, however, of fourteen or fifteen having surrendered.

"His Lordship answered, 'That is well, but I bargained for twenty': and then emphatically exclaimed, '*Anchor, Hardy; anchor!*'

"To this the Captain replied, 'I suppose, my Lord, Admiral Collingwood will now take upon himself the direction of affairs'. \*

"'Not while I live, I hope, Hardy!' cried the dying Chief; and at that moment endeavoured ineffectually to raise himself from the bed.

"'No,' added he; 'do *you* anchor, Hardy.'

"Captain Hardy then said: 'Shall *we* make the Signal, Sir?'

"'Yes,' answered his Lordship; 'for if I live, I'll anchor.'

"He then told Captain Hardy, 'he felt that in a few minutes he should be no more'; adding in a low tone, 'but don't throw me overboard, Hardy'.

"The Captain answered: 'Oh! no, certainly not'.

"'Then,' replied his Lordship, 'you know what to do: and,' continued he, 'take care of my dear Lady Hamilton, Hardy; take care of poor Lady Hamilton. Kiss me, Hardy.'

"The Captain now knelt down, and kissed his cheek; when his Lordship said, 'Now I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done by duty.'

"Captain Hardy stood for a minute or two in silent contemplation: he then knelt down again and kissed his Lordship's forehead.

"His Lordship said: 'Who is that?'

"The Captain answered, 'It is Hardy': to which his Lordship replied, 'God bless you, Hardy!'

"After this affecting scene Captain Hardy withdrew, and re-

\* As soon as he was wounded Nelson instructed a messenger to give Admiral Collingwood his love and to say that he was wounded but not dangerously. Collingwood always used to declare that the man's "face" blurted out the truth.

turned to the quarter-deck: having spent about eight minutes in this his last interview with his dying friend.\*

"His Lordship's thirst now increased: and he called for 'Drink, drink,' 'Fan, fan!' and 'Rub, rub!' addressing himself in the last call to Dr. Scott, who had been rubbing his breast with his hand, from which he found some relief. These words he spoke in a very rapid manner, which rendered his articulation difficult: but he every now and then, with evident increase of pain, made a greater effort with his vocal powers, and pronounced distinctly these last words: 'Thank God, I have done my duty;,' and this great sentiment he continued to repeat as long as he was able to give it utterance.

"His Lordship became speechless in about fifteen minutes after Captain Hardy left him. Dr. Scott and Mr. Burke, who had all along sustained the bed under his shoulders, forbore to disturb him by speaking to him; and when he had remained speechless about five minutes, his Lordship's Steward went to the Surgeon, and stated his apprehensions that his Lordship was dying. The Surgeon immediately repaired to him, and knelt down by his side, and took up his hand; which was cold, and the pulse gone from the wrist.

"On the Surgeon's feeling his forehead, which was likewise cold, his Lordship opened his eyes, looked up, and shut them again."

. . . . .

#### EXTRACT FROM THE VICTORY'S LOG.

*Partial firing continued until 4.30 P.M., when a victory having been reported to the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Nelson, he then died of his wound.*

#### FINALE

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away;  
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz bay;  
Bluish mid the burning water full in face Trafalgar lay.†

—BROWNING.

"Five of their van have tacked and show an intention of bear-

\* Hardy survived the battle for thirty-four years. At his death they found round his neck a miniature of Nelson which he had worn night and day ever since.

† Trafalgar means the "Cape of Laurels".

ing down upon the *Victory*." Such was the news that Hardy brought to the cockpit. By "their van" he referred to the ten leading ships which had been left out of the combat altogether. Nelson had calculated that they could not return without undue delay; and that delay would ruin them. His anticipations were exactly fulfilled. The light air and the rolling swell made it very difficult for them to go about. They would never have gone about at all without the aid of their boats. And when they did at last go about it was three o'clock and the battle was almost ended.

Still for all that they were a compact band, and their numbers should have enabled them to influence the result. But they did not influence the result. They did not know what to do. They ceased to remain a compact band. They broke up into three insignificant fragments. One, the *Intrépide*, with a gallantry worthy of the finest records of the sea, dashed to the help of Villeneuve. She plunged into a tangle of Britishers. It was magnificent; but unavailing. Codrington, who seems on this afternoon to have been everywhere at once, brought his fire to bear on her, and after that there was nothing more to be said. But Captain Infernet of the *Intrépide* would have fought while a soul remained alive. Ten Frenchmen had to hold him down while they made surrender of his ship. Of the other nine sail four fell away to leeward playing a sorry part. They eventually arrived at Cadiz. The remaining five rallied round the flag of Dumanoir, their proper Admiral, and came on in a business-like way. These were the five to which Hardy referred. They made for the stricken *Victory*, and for a moment the position was critical. But the last two ships of Nelson's column saw the danger. One of them was the *Minotaur* who had helped the *Vanguard* at the Nile. She and the *Spartiate*, acting as a reserve, fought Dumanoir by themselves. Standing eastward in line ahead, they raked the five as they approached: and they fought them till help came; fought them till the last French hope was gone; and Dumanoir (with only four ships now) disappeared from the field.

So the battle ended.

Of the six flag-officers who commanded the Allied Fleet, one had been kept out of the battle till too late. Two, including the

noble Gravina,\* were mortally wounded. Three, including the Commander-in-Chief, were prisoners in British hands. In itself, this was sufficient to make Trafalgar remarkable. But it was not by any means all. The British casualties have been called heavy. They were heavy. They were bound to be heavy when all exposed themselves so fearlessly. Of dead and wounded there were 1,663. But the enemy at the lowest estimate lost 14,000 men and of these the greater part perished.

And round the *Victory* were the twenty prizes that Nelson had bargained for: twenty ships, two-thirds of the combined fleet, taken from an enemy with the advantage of numbers, taken from an enemy with the advantage of position, taken from an enemy of acknowledged skill and unshaken gallantry. Of the thirty-three proud ships that had ventured from Cadiz, a wretched remnant remained: and Dumanoir's four stretched away to the north seeking a haven in vain.†

\* Gravina reached home and died in the arms of his brother, the Archbishop of Nicaea. "I die happy," he said at last. "I am going to join Nelson, the greatest hero the world has produced."

† Nelson's "Anchor, Hardy; Anchor!" was prophetic of a coming storm. The storm came and under the lee of the broken ships were the Trafalgar shoals and the entrance to Cadiz. The storm rose in violence to a hurricane and raged for four long days. Yet the Britons budged not. They rode out the gale; lost not a ship. To the Spaniards there was something in this more marvellous than the actual battle. Britons, however, have withheld their admiration: and wondered less that their own ships were saved than that the prizes were allowed to founder. As if their destruction were due to an oversight or some sleepy carelessness somewhere! Collingwood did all that was humanly possible; but he could not in an hour on the open sea re-equip a fleet of wrecks or man them with British seamen. From the first the prizes had a provoking way of finding their own way home. Three of them drifted of their own accord right into Cadiz. A brave French captain put out with a squadron to accelerate this welcome process. He rescued two more—the *Santa Ana* and one other. But the game was too hazardous. The British accounted for four of his force and raised their score again to nineteen. Of these only the *Swiftsure*, *Bahama*, *Ildefonso* and *Nepomuceno* reached an English harbour. Of the rest, one perished by fire upon the battlefield. One, the famous *Redoubtable*, wounded below the water-line, sank while towed by her captors. Nine, including the *Bucentaure* and *Fougueux*, were wrecked and cast away. The remaining four were destroyed: scuttled (like the *Trinidad*) or burned (like the *Intrépide*). Of the vessels at Cadiz one reached harbour in a sinking condition: five were complete wrecks. None of them ever again saw service at sea. Dumanoir's four did their best to reach

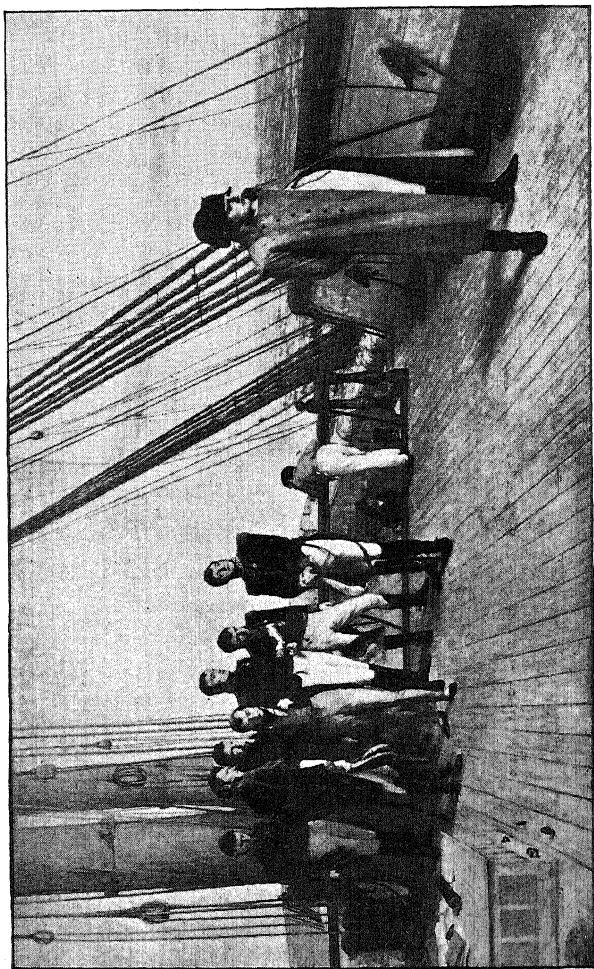
Never before had such a result been achieved. In no pitched battle by sea, not even in the bloody encounters of Duncan and Albemarle, had 60 per cent. of the enemy's force ever before been captured. In this respect let but the battle of Trafalgar be set beside La Hogue, or The Saints, or the Glorious First of June. And the magnitude of the conquest was due not to lust of blood as in the battles of Genghiz or Attila, not to lust of ambition as in Napoleon's. For himself there was no need of further victory: Nelson had already scaled the highest pinnacles of fame. The fight was fought and the victory gained because the greatest of her sons still loved England better than all. The sacrifice of his life, while life was sweet to him, was the noblest thing that Europe had seen for a thousand years and more.

Napoleon, the giant of warfare, defeated the Austrians not once or twice. He defeated them at Marengo. He defeated them decisively at Austerlitz. They fought him once more and were crushed at Wagram only to rise and foil him at Leipsic. But neither French nor Spanish rose again to challenge the verdict of Trafalgar. It was final, absolute; a judgment without appeal. Henceforth upon the ocean there was no voice nor any that answered. Trafalgar was the most decisive battle fought in Napoleon's lifetime, and it proved, as Macaulay says, that the naval power of Britain was to Napoleon what a stream of running water was to a witch. It set the bounds to his influence. It circumscribed his power. He might still terrorize Europe, but he could not dominate the world. For long he would not believe it. For ten years he struggled against it. But his acknowledgment, if tardy, came at last. It came on a July day in 1815 when at Rochefort the Emperor abandoned his hope of escaping to America. "Wherever there is water to float a ship," he said, "we are sure to find you English in the way": and he yielded himself to the *Bellerophon*; the *Bellerophon*, earliest in action on the Glorious First of June, the *Bellerophon*, the pride of the Nile,

Rochefort. But on 4th November they were captured *en masse* by Sir Richard Strachan who had taken up the blockade. This fine piece of work brought in another Admiral and raised the net takings to twenty-three of the line or 70 per cent. of the whole force engaged. The gross takings were 85 per cent. One of Dumanoir's squadron, the *Duguay-Trouin*, was rechristened *Imflacable* and served until 1905 as a training ship at Devonport.







NAPOLÉON ON BOARD THE *BELLEROPHON*

On July 23, 1815, Napoleon was on deck by 5 A.M. to take his last long look at France. He climbed up on the poop and stood sadly gazing at the coast until nearly mid-day. While on board he asked Captain Maitland interminable questions about the rigging and the sails, spoke in high praise of Nelson, admired the neatness and cleanliness of the ship, and marvelled at the quiet way in which the men performed their work.

the "Death or glory" of Trafalgar, the rare old "Billy Ruff'n" of the tars.

Like a great edifice or mountain Trafalgar is best seen from a distance. Pitt, a few months afterwards, died of a broken heart. And the lesser men of 1805, unable otherwise to explain its importance, invented a legend which ascribed to the battle their deliverance from invasion. But the men of 1905 found the proper perspective. From their view-point they saw that Nelson's masterpiece had enabled their empire to grow upon the sea for a hundred years unchallenged.

That Collingwood, the master of style, should write the Trafalgar dispatches was appropriate enough. His letter "moves with the dignity of an anthem, and gives the glory to God, not to man". But his first thought is for Nelson. "My heart is rent with the most poignant grief for the death of a friend, to whom I was bound by the strongest ties of affection; a grief to which even the glorious occasion in which he fell does not bring the consolation which perhaps it ought."\*

For every one it was the same, rich and poor, gentle and simple, admiral and seaman; the surpassing splendour of the victory was quenched in the news of Nelson's death. One who died towards the close of the nineteenth century recalled, as the most vivid impression of a long life, a childish memory. The church bells had been pealing and dancing with glee, swinging high and low like a

\* Perhaps the saddest thing in Collingwood's life was the refusal of the Government to allow him to return after the great battle. He yearned for home, to see again the faces he loved so well, and the garden and the cotes and the smoke of his own fire. But the Government were nervous; felt safe only while he was at sea. So at sea he stayed, year after year; eating his heart out and saying no word. It mattered little to him that they raised him to the peerage. He cared nothing for titles. He wanted to come home. Sickness came upon him and still he sailed the weary seas, seeking for a foe that dared not face him. His officers took him ashore, but nothing could be done for him. So they carried him on board again and made for Gibraltar. He was told he was at sea. "Then I may yet live to fight the French once more," he said, and dropped into a reverie. Towards the end he rallied and amazed even those who knew him best by the sweet calm of his death-bed. Without a sigh of regret, a murmur of pain, or a trace of fear he passed into the presence of the God whom he had served in faith and meekness through every hour of an unsullied career (7th March, 1810). His body was carried home and laid as was meet by Nelson's side.

wedding-chime. It was impossible to miss the infection of their merriment. Then quite suddenly they stopped. Stopped; and with solemn boom came the muffled monotone, the dull clang of the passing bell. Toll! Toll! The presage of gloom and woe and misery. "Have you heard the BAD news?" asked the turn-pike keeper. "We have taken twenty ships, but—we have lost Lord Nelson." He brushed a tear away with his sleeve.

And here are the words of a simple jack-tar, one of the "Royal Sovereigns". They are taken from a letter written to his friends immediately after the battle.

"Our dear Admiral Nelson is killed! So we have paid pretty sharply for licking 'em. I never set eyes on him, for which I am both sorry and glad; for, to be sure, I should like to have seen him—but then, all the men in our ship who have seen him are such soft toads, they have done nothing but blast their eyes and cry, ever since he was killed. God bless you! chaps that fought like the devil, sit down and cry like a wench."

Nelson's body was placed in a temporary coffin filled with brandy, camphor and myrrh. The *Victory*, with drooping flags, carried her master home, and in December dropped anchor in the Thames. On the 22nd a yacht came alongside and receiving her burden passed up the river. Minute guns were fired, and both banks were lined with troops. The bells tolled and the bands played solemn music. At Greenwich the aged Lord Hood, who had befriended the hero in the flower of his age, now received his mortal remains. They lay in state from the 4th to the 8th of January, and hundreds of thousands of Londoners passed through the Painted Hall to pay their last tribute of affection. On the 8th a state-barge and many boats set forth from Greenwich. The Lord Mayor attended and many distinguished naval officers. At Whitehall Stairs, the body was received by Norroy King of Arms and nine heralds and pursuivants. It was carried thence to the Admiralty in a violent south-westerly gale.

On the 9th was the funeral. Nothing was lacking that could add impressiveness to the scene. Fourteen thousand pounds were spent; for here was a very king of men and royally they

buried him.\* The Prince of Wales and his brothers attended. The Scots Greys led. Other regiments followed. Then came the throb of the music and the rattle of gun-carriages. Then lines of carriages with the peers of the realm; Garter King at Arms, heralds, pursuivants, Greenwich pensioners, Yeomen of the Guard and Grenadiers. The coffin, one of the most magnificent ever made, was drawn on a car, shaped front and back to represent the *Victory*. Over it four palm-trees supported a canopy that bore Nelson's motto. Sir Peter Parker, his earliest friend, followed as chief mourner, and with him were thirty Admirals and more than a hundred Captains. So they passed through a bare-headed crowd that stretched from Whitehall to Ludgate Hill. It was a gorgeous cavalcade; but what touched the heart of the spectators more than all, was the sight of the *Victory's* men. They carried aloft their Nelson's flag pierced and riddled with bullet-holes in every crevice and crease.

The service in the cathedral was not concluded till late afternoon. Daylight faded and torches were brought. And when the music was hushed, there was a sound unusual in so vast a building—the sound of a multitude weeping. So they laid him to rest, the greatest sailor, the perfect seaman who combined in one all the qualities of all the Sea Kings, the piety of Duncan, the humanity of Howe, the grand eye for a battlefield of Rodney and Albemarle; the courtliness and charm of Keppel, the wit and high spirits of Drake, the motherly care of Anson for his men, the subtlety of Hood, the dash of Hawke, the wanton bravery of Benbow and Grenville, and the flame-pure patriotism of Blake. They laid him to rest, and as the body descended the men of the *Victory*, controlling themselves no longer, dashed at the flag that covered the coffin and tore it to shreds for a remembrance of him.† And there “in London's central roar”

\* Posthumous honours also were paid. Nelson's brother William was created an Earl; a pension of £5,000 to support the title was granted in perpetuity; and a sum of £120,000 was set aside with which was purchased the estate of Downton near Salisbury, known to-day as Trafalgar.

† According to a pretty legend, two distinctive marks of the bluejacket's uniform were adopted to commemorate Nelson: the black silk neckerchief as a memory of his death and the three lines of braid upon the collar to recall his three great victories.

the hero of heroes lies, under the very dome of St. Paul's sleeping his last sleep peacefully. But his spirit lives; and living, tells of the fight well fought, the pain endured, the duty nobly done.

Ever the faith endures,  
    England, my England :—  
“Take and break us : we are yours,  
    England my own !  
Life is good and joy runs high  
Between English earth and sky :  
Death is death : but we shall die  
    To the song on your bugles blown,  
    England—  
    To the stars on your bugles blown !”

## NELSON RELICS.

The following are among the most interesting :—

\* In the United Services Museum, Whitehall.

¶ In the Painted Hall, Greenwich.

<sup>N</sup> In the possession of Lord Nelson.

<sup>V</sup> On board the *Victory*.

The diik which Nelson had as midshipman on board the *Seahorse*.\*

A book on navigation which Nelson used when lieutenant of the *Lowestoft*.<sup>N</sup>

Flags taken from the French at Bastia and Calvi.\*

Sword used by Nelson when boarding the *San Nicolas* at St. Vincent.\*

A sword taken from the Spaniards in the hand-to-hand struggle outside Cadiz, 1797.\*

The coat which Nelson wore at the Nile.¶

The main royal masthead of the *Orient*.\*

The £200 sword presented by the City of London, after the Nile.\*

The musket, sabre, and canteen presented by the Sultan.¶

The Chelngk.\*

The cocked hat worn by Nelson at the Battle of Copenhagen, 1801.\*

Seal used to fasten the letter to the Crown Prince.<sup>N</sup>

Foul-weather hat worn by Nelson during the blockade of Toulon, 1803-5.\*

Furniture, etc., from Nelson's cabin in the *Victory*, viz. :—

Chair.<sup>N</sup>

Table.<sup>N</sup>

Sofa-bed.<sup>N</sup>

Washstand.\*

Hammock-hangings.¶

Combined knife and fork for use with one hand.\*

Telescope.<sup>N</sup>

Bottle of port.\*

His favourite grog-jug.¶

Pasco's telescope used on the poop of the *Victory*, Oct. 21, 1805.\*

Log-book kept by Nelson on board the *Victory*.\*

Part of the mainmast of the *Victory*.\* (This relic still retains a horseshoe hammered on by the Jacks for luck.)

Part of the mizen topmast of the *Victory* brought down by the enemy.\*

Double-headed bar-shot which killed the eight marines.\*

Clothes worn by Nelson at Trafalgar, viz. :—

Coat.¶

Waistcoat ¶ (stained by his blood).

Stock.¶

Breeches.¶

Stockings.¶

Gold watch.¶

The ball that killed Lord Nelson. [In the possession of H.M. the King.]

Nelson's hair that he desired should be cut off.¶

Villeneuve's sword.\*

A bottle of the spirit in which Nelson's body was brought home.\*

The state-barge in which Nelson's body was conveyed from Greenwich to Whitehall Stairs.∇

Ticket of admittance to funeral.\*

Part of the flag torn to pieces by the *Victory's* men at the funeral.\*

## GLOSSARY.

**Abeam.** (1) In a line at right angles to the ship's length.

(2) Opposite the centre of a ship's side.

**Able seaman.** One "able" to reef and hand [i.e. furl] a sail, steer a ship according to the compass and, by a complete knowledge of knots and splices, repair any part of the rigging.

**Above board.** Over the deck.

**Athwart-hawse.** Across the stem of another ship at anchor. [**Hawse.** Properly that part of a vessel's bow where holes are cut for the cables to pass through. Used loosely for the *Bow* itself.]

**Back, to.** To brace a sail in such a way that the wind may blow directly on the front of it and thus retard the ship's course.

**Barge.** See **Boats**.

**Beak-head.** See pp. iii and xxiv, and PLATES I and IX.

**Bear up.** To keep farther away from the wind, by putting the helm up.

**Bend.** Properly a fastening or knot. *To bend a sail*, is to fasten the sail to the yard ready for use.

**Between wind and water.** See p. xviii.

**Block.** A pulley together with its framework.

**Boats.** *Barge.* For the use of an Admiral.

*Gig.* For the use of the Captain.

*Pinnace.* For the use of subordinate officers.

*Long-boat*, or *Launch.* Principal and largest boat of a man-of-war.

*Cutter.* A lighter boat used for general purposes, hung by davits over the Quarter.

*Folly-boat.* A very small and very handy boat, hung by davits over the Stern.

**Boatswain.** See pp. xxvii and xxviii.

**Bolt-rope.** The rope round the edge of a sail to which the canvas is sewn in order to prevent tearing.

**Bomb-vessel.** See pp. xxi and xxii, and PLATE II.

**Bow.** Foremost end of a vessel.

**Bowsprit.** [Corruption of *Bolt-sprit*, i.e. a sprit or tilted boom fastened by a bolt.] See p. x.

**Braces.** Ropes rove through blocks attached to either end of a yard to fix or change its position.

**Brail up.** To haul upon the *Brails*, i.e. special ropes used to furl a fore and aft sail like the Spanker.

**Breeching.** See p. xvii.

**Broad pendant.** The distinctive mark of a Commodore. In Nelson's day a broad red swallow-tail carried at the main royal mast-head.

**By the board.** Fallen overboard or over the ship's side.



**By the head.** When a vessel is deeper in the water forward than aft she is said to be "by the head".

**Cable.** A thick, strong rope to keep the ship at her anchor. See also **Fathom**.

**Carronade.** See p. xxii, *n*.

**Carry on.** To proceed.

**Cathead.** See pp. xxiii and xxiv.

**Channels.** [Corruption of *Chain-Wales*; cp. *Gunnel* for *Gun-Wale*.] See pp. x and xii.

**Close-hauled.** See pp. xv and xvi.

**Cockpit.** See p. xxvii, and **PLATE X**.

**Con.** To direct the steering of a vessel.

**Controller of the Navy.** The Minister or Officer responsible for the military construction of the Fleet. The Controller of the modern Navy is known officially as the Third Sea Lord.

**Courses.** The sails which hang from the lower yards. See **PLATE II**.

**Coxswain.** A seaman who steers a boat. [*Swain*, a man; and *Cokke*, a boat in use during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.]

**Crank.** Said of a vessel incapable of carrying her sails without danger of overturning.

**Cross-Jack yard.** See p. xiv. [Pronounced Crow-Jeck.]

**Cutter.** See **Boats**.

**Double-shotted.** Of cannon loaded with two shots. [Note.—The two shots separated the moment they left the muzzle. Hence the use of Chain-shot, i.e. two cannon-balls connected by a chain. See **PLATE IV**.]

**Drag her anchor.** Said of a vessel that breaks her anchor out of the ground.

**End on.** The opposite of broadside on. In **PLATE IX** we have an "end on" view of the *Victory*.

**Fathom.** Six feet. [One hundred *Fathoms* make one *Cable* and ten cables one *Knot* or nautical mile.]

**Fifty.** See p. xxi.

**Flag-ship.** The vessel that carries an Admiral.

**Flying light.** The state of a ship when she has little cargo.

**Gallery.** A balcony built outside the body of the ship; either at the stern [**Stern-gallery**] or at the quarter [**Quarter-gallery**].

**Go about.** To tack.

**Gunner.** See p. xxvi.

**Half pistol-shot.** Sixty yards.

**Halyard.** A rope or purchase used for hoisting or lowering a sail, yard, or flag.

**Hatch.** Covering of a hatchway.

**Hatchway.** Opening in a ship's deck.

**Haul to the wind.** To bring the ship's head up to six points from the wind after sailing free.

**Hawse.** See **Athwart-hawse**.

**Heave to.** To bring a ship to a standstill by making one set of sails act against another.

**Heave the log.** To determine a ship's velocity.

**Jolly-boat.** See **Boats**.

**Jury-masts.** } Temporary substitutes set up in a ship disabled by shot or  
**Jury-rigging.** } weather.

**Langridge.** Scrap-iron used instead of shot.

**Lanyard.** A short piece of rope used for various purposes.

**Larboard.** The old term for **Port**.

**Launch.** Same as **Long-boat**.

**Leeway.** The lateral drift of a vessel to leeward of her course when sailing near the wind.

**Letter of Marque.** A commission given to a private ship by a government to make reprisals on the vessels of another state.

**Lifts.** Ropes from the mast-head to the yard-arm. They keep the yard in equilibrium, raise either end when necessary, and support the weight of hands sent aloft to reef and furl.

**Line abreast.** See p. xxxiv.

**Line ahead.** See p. xxxiv.

**Long-boat.** See **Boats**.

**Luff.** } To bring a vessel close to the wind. This is done by easing the  
**Spring luff.** } helm down.

**Made Post, to be.** To become a Captain. A *Post-Captain* was so called to distinguish him from a *Flag-Captain*. The title was adopted 1713 and abolished 1824.

**Master.** See pp. xxxv and xxxvi.

**Mortar-boat.** See pp. xxi and xxii.

**Offing.** To seaward. Beyond the anchoring-ground.

**Overhaul.** To overtake another vessel.

**Pinnace.** See **Boats**.

**Port-lid.** The shutter or covering of a gun-port. See **PLATE IV**.

**Privateer.** An armed private vessel commissioned by government to seize and plunder an enemy's ships.

**Put up helm.** To bear up. To keep away from the wind. To run free after sailing close-hauled.

**Quarter.** That part of a vessel's side from abaft the mainmast to the stern.

**Quarter-master.** See p. xxv.

**Rake.** To sweep a vessel from stem to stern or from stern to stem with broadside fire.

**Reeve, to.** To thread. To pass the end of a rope through any aperture.

**Running free.** Sailing with the wind abaft the beam.

**Seventy-four.** See pp. xix and xx.

**Sheer hulk.** An old dismasted ship; used in dockyards for rigging purposes. [*Sheers*, an apparatus like a derrick or crane.]

**Sheets.** Tackle attached to the lower corners of a sail to spread and to curb the canvas.

**Shoals.** Shallows.

**Shorten sail.** To take in sail.

**Shrouds.** See p. x.

**Sixty-four.** See pp. xix and xx.

**Slack in stays.** Slow in tacking.

**Sloop.** See p. xxi.

**Spanker.** See p. xiv.

**Spring a mast.** A mast is said to be sprung when a flaw is discovered in it or a sudden rent or split is occasioned by carrying too great a pressure of canvas.

**Spritsail.** See p. x.

**Staysails.** See p. xiv.

**Stern.** The after end of a vessel.

**Stern-chasers.** Two guns mounted in stern ports to cover the wake of a ship.

**Strike.** To haul down one's colours; to surrender.

**Studding-sails.** See p. xiv.

**Stun-sails.** Same as Studding-sails.

**Tack.** (a) A rope attached to the lower corner of a sail on its weather side to confine the canvas in-board when the vessel sails upon a wind.

(b) To turn the ship's head round, against and in opposition to the direction of the wind.

**Taffrail.** The upper part of the stern of a ship.

**Tompion.** A circular plug of wood used to stop the muzzle of a gun and thereby keep out the wet.

**Truck.** A circular cap on the upper mast-head holding a pulley through which signal halyards are rove.

**Wear.** To go about by turning away from the wind and afterwards hauling to it gradually.

**Yard-arm.** The extremity of a yard.

















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